■ Entertainment / A26

Bride Matet cries at her wedding

■ World / A10

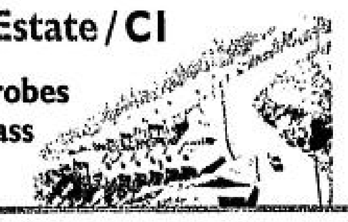
Israel kills Hamas founder

■ Business / B1

Petron hikes gasoline, kerosene prices

■ Real Estate / C1

DENR probes Buhai mass housing



Tanong ng Bayan / A18

Si Hiansen ba ang bagong Acsa?

NGAYONG ALAS-10 NG GABI

Peso drops to record low of 56.45 to $1

By Doris C. Dumlao
Business

THE PESO yesterday sank to a record 56.45 to the US dollar as concerns over dwindling foreign exchange inflows to the country prompted companies to buy the greenback to settle their import bills and repay their foreign loans.

PESO/ A7

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Estrada's rest house: A villa or just a hut?

By Armand N. Nocum

KUBO PALANG YUN NA MAY SWIMMING POOL

ONE MAN'S Mediterranean-style villa is another man's nipa hut.

To lowly paid government lawyers, ousted President Joseph Estrada's resort

ERAP/ A8

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Tuesday, March 23, 2004 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 106 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Loren slams bailout of Lopez water firm

ANOTHER SCORE
President Macapagal crosses out the picture of Feliciano Laygo, No. 6 on the government's list of most wanted kidnappers, following his arrest last week. The suspect was presented to the media at Fort Bonifacio. VAL HANDUMON

MWSS to hike rates to cover unpaid debts

By Carlito Pablo
and Christine Gaylican

FINALLY, Sen. Loren Legarda has summoned up the courage to lash out at the Lopezes, owners of the ABS-CBN television network where she worked as a newsreader before joining politics.

Legarda, running mate of opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., yesterday denounced as a "midnight deal that stinks to high heavens" the P8-billion government bailout of Maynilad Water Services, the financially troubled water utility of the Lopez-controlled Benpres Holdings Corp.

But Oscar Lopez, chair of Benpres, said there was no government bailout of Maynilad. *(See story on this page.)*

Legarda said the deal was "an unforgivable betrayal of the public trust."

With the budget deficit problem, the deal is "nothing less than criminal" because it was done with "callousness (*garapal*) and utter disdain for public opinion," she said.

LOREN/ A8

No gov't bailout of Maynilad, says Lopez

NO GOVERNMENT bailout of Maynilad Water Services, and not a single centavo for the Lopezes.

The first assurance came from Oscar M. Lopez, chair of Benpres Holdings Corp., majority owner of Maynilad.

The second came from President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"How can it be a bailout when the Lopez Group is completely writing off its equity investment of $80 million?" Lopez said in a statement. "If there was a political deal with the government, how come in addition to our loss in Maynilad, Meralco's rates have remained unadjusted?"

Meralco [Manila Electric Co.] is also owned by the Lopezes.

Lopez said vested interests were taking advantage of the election campaign by injecting politics into purely business decisions, and in the process demonizing the Lopez family. "Even the matter of an ABS-CBN talent like Dolphy, which is a purely show business concern, is being given political color. What a cheap political stunt," Lopez said.

Ms Macapagal said Maynilad would not get any money under the rehabilitation plan for the water utility.

"I am being criticized (for the Maynilad deal) but the money will go to the MWSS (Metropolitan

NO GOV'T/ A8

Lacson asks traders: Will you fire GMA?

By Norman Bordadora

OPPOSITION presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson posed one question to a group of business leaders who met with him yesterday to find out how he proposed to govern if elected in May.

"I asked them, 'If the Philippines were one of your corporations, would you have handed the walking papers to your CEO (chief executive officer), who is GMA?" Lacson said, recounting to reporters what happened at the

LACSON/ A4

ABS-CBN SACKING OF COMEDIAN

Erap: Show biz personalities backing Dolphy

By Volt Contreras,
Marinel R. Cruz
and Christine O. Avendaño

JAILED ex-President Joseph Estrada yesterday said show biz personalities were mounting a campaign in support of top comedian Dolphy and "might call on fans to boycott ABS-CBN."

Estrada disclosed the plan as he backed allegations that Malacañang had a hand in the "painful" fate that befell his 75-year-old friend, and warned the Macapagal administration of a possible "backlash."

The Lopez family owns ABS-CBN and controls the financially troubled Maynilad Water Services, which the government is poised to take over. Sen. Noli de Castro, an ABS-CBN newsreader, is President Macapagal-Arroyo's running mate in the May elections.

"Dolphy commands a lot of respect in the industry," Estrada said.

Dolphy's sacking by the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN network, allegedly for campaigning for their common friend, opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., "shows the power to bargain or negotiate" being wielded by the President to ensure her victory in the May 10 polls, Estrada said.

"This is why the framers of the Constitution don't allow [sitting] Presidents to seek reelection because they not only have all government resources at their command, but they also have the influence, the persuasive power, the power of threats," he said.

Estrada was ousted from office in 2001 following the Edsa II uprising that installed then Vice President Macapagal to power. He is now detained in a military camp in Tanay, Rizal, on plunder charges.

"It must be painful for him—for any professional—to be suddenly out of work and not by his own fault," Estrada said of Dolphy's situation in a phone interview. "The man is making a legitimate living—and suddenly you take it all away from him?"

"Can you blame him [for supporting Poe]?" he stressed. "This is the first time he has openly supported him because it was FPJ's father who gave him a break [in show biz]," he added.

Among those who were leading meetings to drum up support for Dolphy were actors Richard Gomez and Armida Siguion-Reyna, and producer Marichu Maceda, Estrada said.

Dolphy may be losing a show on

ERAP/ A8

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE ELECTION 2004

Iron-fisted man as 'idol'

Editor's Note: The Inquirer *continues a series of essays on the campaign style and impact of the five presidential candidates, a two-parter for each in alphabetical order.*

By Elvira Mata
Desk Editor

(First of two parts)

IDOL! Bulakeños called out to Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson as he walked the narrow streets of Obando, Bulacan, past the church where couples pray for babies, weaving through waiting jeepneys and pedicabs all the way to the public market.

This was his first stop in a 13-town sortie which started with a motorcade at 8 a.m., slowly making his way to Meycauayan, Marilao, Bocaue and so on until he reached Baliuag at the end of the day.

It was late February, three weeks into the campaign period and Lacson was in Bro. Eddie (Villanueva) country, court-

IRON-FISTED/ A16

QUEZON CITY. He doesn't smile, he's not effusive, but still the crowds love Panfilo "Ping" Lacson who, at 55, is the youngest presidential candidate. FREDDIE MANALAC

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2004

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/23/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Elite antiterror force formed

By Alcuin Papa and Juliet Labog-Javellana

MANILA MUST not be another Madrid.

This was the strong message aired by President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday as she ordered the creation of an antiterrorism task force to prevent the March 11 deadly train bombings in Spain from happening in the Philippines. The attacks killed over 200 people.

The President named Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita as coordinator of the task force.

"The recent bombings in Madrid and the continuing assaults in Iraq remind us of the imperative of collective vigilance against this gravest threat of the 21st century," she said in an Army Day speech at Fort Bonifacio.

"They remind us that terrorism can strike anytime, anywhere, in an ally of the (US-led) coalition like Madrid, or even in somebody who is uncomfortable with the coalition, like Bali."

She was referring to the Indonesian tourist resort of Bali in Indonesia, where 202 people were killed in blasts in October 2002 blamed on the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a Southeast Asian extremist group linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"Therefore, I have instructed the Cabinet oversight committee on internal security ... to put together an antiterrorism task force."

She said the group would be composed of elements from the armed forces, the police, the National Bureau of Investigation and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency.

Eminent general

The task force will also include "an eminent retired general," she said, without mentioning any name.

For advisers, the unit will have former President Fidel Ramos, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Lower House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

"We shall combine and consolidate all the resources and expertise to fight terror," the President said. "We shall connect the grassroots with the national and transnational efforts."

Spanish authorities are investigating a claim by an alleged al-Qaida member that the Madrid attacks were retaliation for Spain's backing of the US operation in Iraq.

Like Spain, the Philippines has supported the US-led invasion of Iraq and sent a peacekeeping team there.

Ms Macapagal has said she will not pull out the Filipino troops despite warnings from leftists that the Philippines could be targeted by terrorists.

Cease-fire holding

Ms Macapagal said fighting with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mindanao had subsided, the cease-fire was holding and an international observers team was arriving in the country to monitor the truce.

But she warned, "the terrorist network, which has been considerably weakened, must not be underestimated."

"As part of peace negotiations with the MILF, we are pushing for concrete measures that will effectively isolate terrorist elements from the MILF guerrilla bases," she said.

Avoid repeat

Ermita said the task force was part of the government's response to avoid a repeat of the Madrid bombings in the country.

"My role will be to coordinate all these efforts to ensure that we have appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of any terroristic activities," he said.

"We must have ready elements of the different agencies, such as elements of the armed forces, PNP, NICA, NBI, even the Bureau of Immigration ready to address this problem."

Ermita said the focus of the task force would not be limited to monitoring threats from JI, which has been blamed for numerous attacks in Southeast Asia.

About 30 JI members are believed hiding in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur, Ermita said, according to the Associated Press.

Doubts

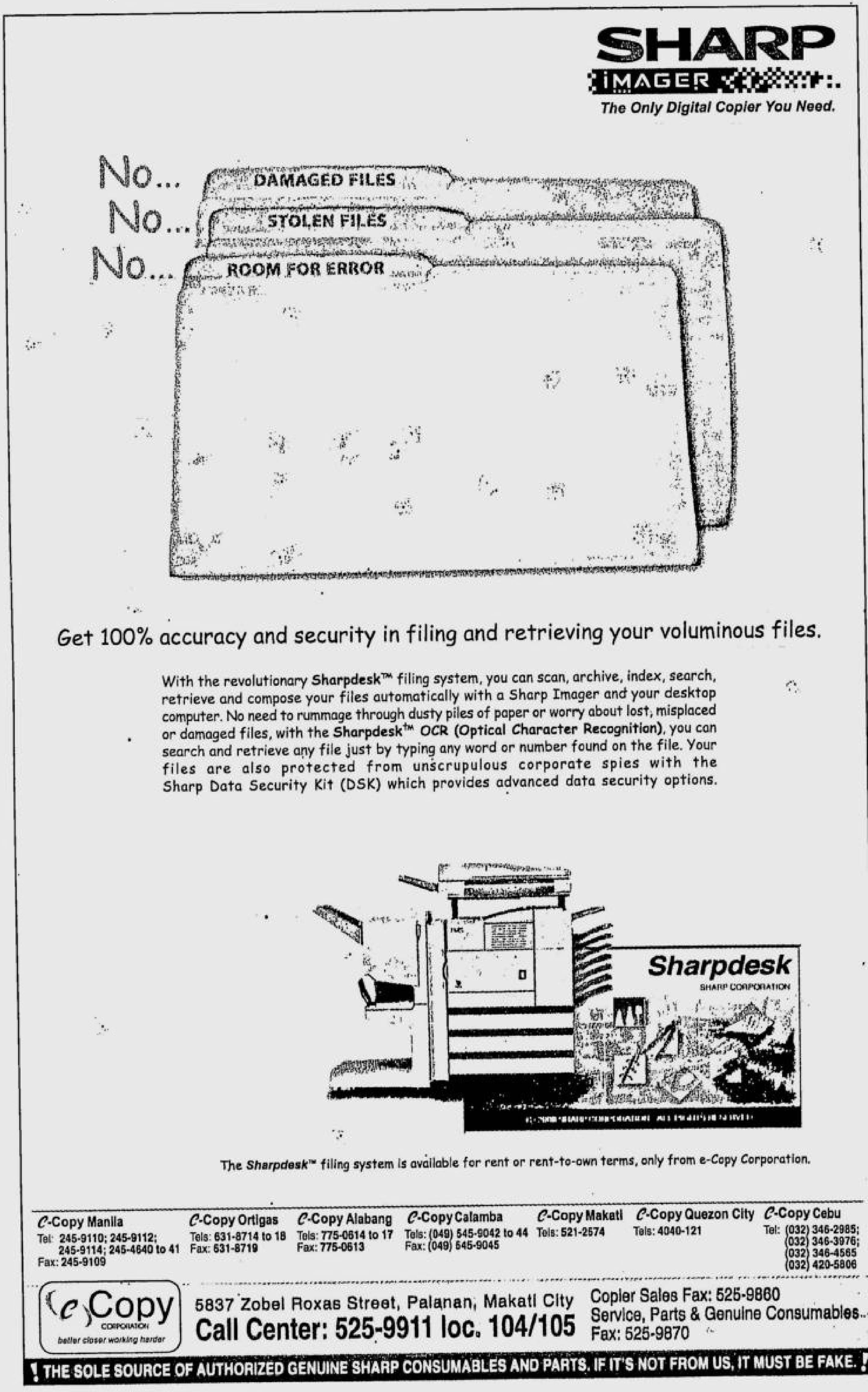
A top police official has expressed doubt about MILF's in ending the decades-old secessionist war in Mindanao.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said at least four groups led by MILF commanders were behind the abduction of six people, including three businessmen, in separate incidents dating back to May last year.

Documents obtained by the Inquirer referred to the abduction of Leoncio Buenafe Jr. on May 25, Hernani Panas, Ray Escanlar and Datu Galves on Sept. 19, Norman Sia on Dec. 8, and Zoila Kanzi last Feb. 12.

Buenafe was abducted in South Cotobato, Sia in Cotobato City, and Kanzi and the Panas group in Sultan Kudarat, according to the report. *With Christian V. Esguerra; AP*

PRESIDENT Macapagal reacts to something on the marching field during yesterday's celebration of Army Day at Fort Bonifacio where she announced the formation of an elite antiterror force to be headed by Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita (right). VAL HANDUMON



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Israel issues travel advisory on Palawan

By Jerome Aning

FOR MOST tourists, Palawan is a tropical island paradise. But for Israelis, it's a dangerous place to visit.

On Sunday, Israel included Palawan among places Israelis should avoid during the Passover holidays.

Passover coincides with the Christian Holy Week, when thousands of Israelis traditionally make holiday trips abroad because of potential terrorist threats in their own country.

"We have information that terror activity is on the rise there," Brig. Gen. Daniel Arditi, National Counterterrorism Adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was quoted as saying by the Israeli media.

Arditi believes Palawan, with a sizable Muslim minority, is especially dangerous to Israeli travelers.

Palawan Rep. Abraham Mitra was quick to react. "There are no terror threats in Palawan," Mitra said in a statement issued in Rio Tuba after he met with political leaders of a Muslim community in Balacac.

He added, "the only reason the Abu Sayyaf went to Palawan in 2001 was when President Estrada ordered the marine contingents based in Palawan to move to Camp Abubakar. Now that they are back here, I am confident Palawan will remain a peaceful province and regain the confidence of tourists from Asia and all over the world. Advisories like this are uncalled for and should be subjected to further scrutiny as this could damage (our) image as an international tourist destination."

In May 2001, Abu Sayyaf terrorists abducted foreign and Filipino tourists as well as local residents from a Palawan beach resort. Most hostages either escaped, were executed or released after paying ransom.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Julia Heidemann said she would seek clarification on the advisory.

"I don't know the basis for the advisory, on what they claim as the rise of terrorist activities in the area. But if it's stated, we'll try to verify and correct it if necessary," she told reporters.

On Monday, Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was killed in an Israeli helicopter strike in the Gaza Strip. Hamas immediately declared open war against Israel, with thousands of Palestinians marching on Gaza to denounce the killing. This incident is expected to affect the more than one million Filipinos working in the Middle East. *With a report from AFP*

Despite violence, Pinoy force to stay in Kosovo

By Jerome Aning

FOREIGN Secretary Delia Albert said on Saturday the Philippines would not pull its 55-member peacekeeping police force out of Kosovo despite the recent spate of ethnic violence there that has left at least 32 dead and more than 500 wounded.

Philippine Ambassador to Hungary Alejandro del Rosario reported that some of the houses where members of the Filipino contingent were billeted were burned and ransacked during the violence.

Fortunately, the Filipino peacekeepers were on patrol in another area when the burning took place, Del Rosario said.

Emerging from a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan at UN headquarters in New York City, Albert said, "The Philippines, as a responsible UN member... is committed to remain in Kosovo and contribute to the ongoing efforts to restore order there."

The 55 Filipino civilian police officers serve with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (Unmik). Forty other Filipinos work for Unmik as administrative personnel and technical staff.

"These acts of violence will not deter us in our commitment to support the UN ... The Philippines shall remain in Kosovo to help in the restoration of peace and in the maintenance of political stability," Albert said.

The latest violence, directed by ethnic Albanians against ethnic Serbs, prompted a swift condemnation from the Philippines and other members of the Security Council.

In an emergency meeting of the Security Council last weekend, Permanent Representative to the UN Lauro Baja Jr. expressed indignation over the outbreak of violence.

"Right now, the most important thing is to restore order there. The international community must take the necessary steps to make sure the rule of law prevails in Kosovo and those responsible for the latest wave of violence are brought to justice," he said.

Increase in Muslim voters noted

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo's continued support for a US-led invasion of Iraq has spawned "a genuine Muslim Filipino vote" because younger Muslims want to influence how the country and the world should view Islam, Islamic leaders and a party-list group said here over the weekend.

Bedejim Abdullah, a Baguio-based Islamic scholar of the Darul Hijra Foundation, said the new voters' registration conducted by the Commission on Elections for the May 2004 polls drew an unprecedented increase in Muslim Filipino registrants.

But a solid Muslim vote still has to be coaxed out, said Wahab Guilal, top nominee of the party-list group, Suara Bangsamoro, and president of the Left-leaning Muslim Christian People's Alliance (MCPA).

Wahab said new Muslim voters were trying to outgrow the racial stigma that made many of their elders shun politics.

"Many Muslims outside Mindanao fled to the north to escape the war and the politicians who drove them to war. So many asked, 'Why should we vote? Nadala na kami diyan sa pulitika (we have already been burnt by politics),'" he said.

The latest Pulse Asia 'survey placed Sura Bangsamoro as the ninth ranking party-list group people would vote for, he said.

Wahab also spoke before a Baguio forum on March 20, designated by anti-war activists as "the Global Day of Action Against War and Terrorism." *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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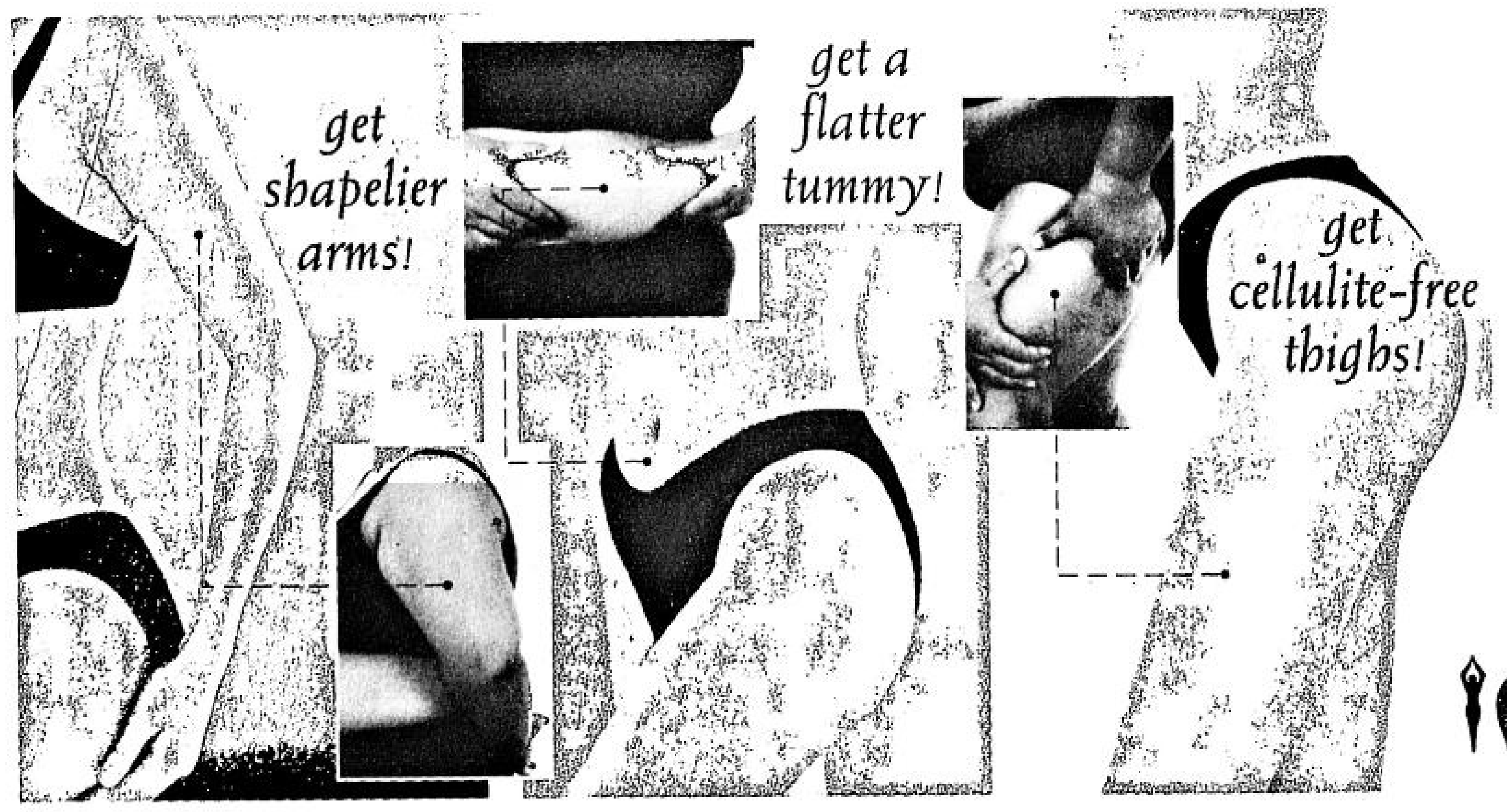
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Security tightened around FPJ

By Alcuin Papa, Carlito Pablo and Christine O. Avendaño

IT'S A plot straight out of a Harrison Ford movie.

A former military general said yesterday there was a plot to assassinate presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Retired Gen. Tomas Diaz, president of the Association of Generals for Poe and Legarda (Agpol), said the group received tips from concerned informants that Poe would be "cheated or killed" before or during the elections.

Because the action star is leading in the surveys, Diaz said it isn't surprising there are groups that do not want to see him win.

Upgrade

Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, Poe's campaign manager, said yesterday the opposition was working on upgrading security arrangements for Poe.

Sotto declined to say whether Poe faced danger to his personal security but noted: "As of late last week, we'd been monitoring something which is security (related)."

Ex-Army colonel and now Sen. Gregorio Honasan is in charge of perimeter security, while retired police General Roberto Calinisan is on top of close-in security for the movie actor.

"We're going to overhaul and upgrade security arrangements," Sotto said.

Actor Eddie Garcia, a constant companion of Poe in his sorties, said in a text message relayed through Poe's media bureau that, threat or no threat, Poe would continue to reach out to the people.

Poe supporter Rep. Imee Marcos (KBL, Ilocos Norte) yesterday issued an official statement calling for "tougher security" for the actor.

Pressure

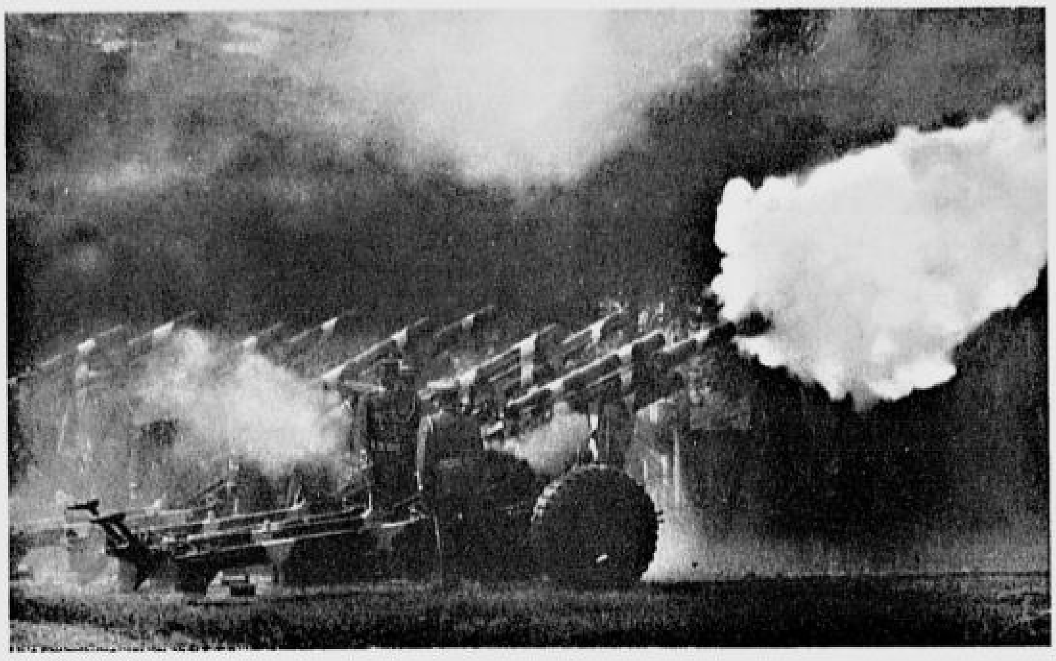
She said that as election day neared, "pressure would be on his (Poe's) opponents and individuals with threatened interests to come up with ways to stop his relentless march to the presidency."

Marcos suggested that Poe get additional security escorts from the Philippine National Police or the Armed Forces of the Philippines "instead of relying on (movie) stunt men who serve as his '*hawi* boys.'"

These so-called *hawi* boys have earned their moniker for roughly parting crowds, including media practitioners.

So far, there have been no untoward incidents in the campaign trail of the KNP, except for a KNP staff member who suffered bruises on his forehead and injured two of his fingers when he slipped Sunday while guiding landing helicopters carrying KNP candidates to a sortie in Lupon, Davao Oriental.

Patrick Roa, said to be related to KNP senatorial bet Boots Anson-Roa, was treated for his injuries and is expected to be back to work this week, according to Anson-Roa's aide Roland Tan.



ARMY DAY

Soldiers fire blanks during the 107th founding anniversary celebration of the Philippine Army at Fort Bonifacio, Makati City yesterday. Army chief Lt. Gen. Efren Abu in his speech on the occasion warned that officers and men of the Army who participate in destabilization attempts against the government would draw "heavy" sanctions. AFP

New bidding for questioned Japanese rail project seen

By Clarissa S. Batino

WHILE DENYING allegations by the opposition that the government's bid offer for the $204-million expansion project of the Light Railway Transit 1 system was riddled with irregularities, the transportation department admitted yesterday that a new bidding was likely.

Kilusan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino senatorial bet Francisco Tatad the other day alleged that groups close to the Macapagal administration had tried to extort $1 million from each of the three Japanese bidders in the project to be used allegedly for President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign.

Marubeni Corp. had been disqualified from the bidding, leaving only the Kanematsu-Kawasaki Steel consortium and the Sumitomo-Itochu joint venture as participants.

President Macapagal denied any "midnight deal" in a television interview last night.

Though she did not make any references to Tatad, the President said she hoped her accuser improved his chances to make it to the Magic 12 with his "baseless accusations."

For publicity

"We are open to investigating the allegations of the former senator who should submit concrete pieces of evidence to prove his case," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye. "Otherwise, we will assume this is being done just for publicity's sake."

Marubeni's allegations that the bidding was flawed prompted the Department of Transportation and Communication to seek the justice department's opinion, particularly on the issue of bid security. "The DOTC has exercised due diligence to protect the integrity of the bidding process by way of securing a DOJ opinion," said Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

The DOTC was advised to conduct a new bidding following consultations with the DOJ.

"Cancellation of the bidding process and conducting a new bidding for the project may be in the best interest of the LRTA and the government under the circumstances since this will remove any doubt as to the propriety of the proceedings," the DOJ said.

Mendoza said the bidding process had been stalled pending a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas opinion on whether or not the bidders had complied with the requirements of bid security. *With Gil Cabacungan Jr.*

3 bolt Roco camp for K-4

By Cynthia D. Balana

THREE pillars of presidential candidate Raul Roco's campaign have defected to the administration K-4 coalition and declared their support for President Macapagal-Arroyo, Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats executive director Joey Rufino said yesterday.

The three were identified by Rufino as ex-Rep. Jerome Paras, former chair of the House committee on transportation and communications; Emil Ong, rice czar in the Aquino administration, and former Rep. Luz Bacunawa of Masbate.

At the same time, Rep. Roque Ablan Jr., Ilocos Norte Lakas-CMD chair, and 18 mayors in the province's two congressional districts have declared their support for President Macapagal and reelectionist Gov. Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Ablan called the 18 mayors' move a "major endorsement" of the President in the province where opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. is also popular.

"With most of the province's political leaders supporting the President, she has mightily surged back and her ratings can only improve when the local campaign begins," Ablan said.

Rufino said Paras' defection has further redrawn the political map of Negros Oriental whose governor, as well as the mayor of Dumaguete City, had declared for Ms Macapagal following her barnstorming tour of the island.

Speaker Jose de Venecia will administer the oath to Paras as a Lakas member and chair of Negros Oriental's first district, replacing his brother Rep. Jacinto Paras.

Texts to help voters find their precincts

By Martin P. Marfil

TO MINIMIZE confusion on May 10, election day, the Commission on Elections is planning to set up a texting center so voters could check the location of their precincts.

The plan was discussed yesterday by Comelec officials and later announced to reporters by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos.

"We are now firming up our position so people would know their precincts just by texting or by checking the Internet," Abalos said.

During initial talks, Abalos said the plan was if a voter texts his name, he would immediately get his precinct number, but the details are still being worked out.

Abalos said they expect the system to be in place by April 15 and would cover 40 million voters throughout the country.

The Comelec came up with the idea to prevent the usual chaos on election day. Abalos said that people surge to voting areas in the morning in search of their precincts.

"This could be avoided by just texting... If your name does not appear in the list, then you can send a text and double check," he said.

Lacson asks traders: Will you fire GMA?

From page A1

closed-door meeting in a Makati hotel.

"They didn't answer, they just smiled," Lacson said. "It's been three years (of Ms Macapagal). If the smiles on their faces were approval or disapproval, I really don't know."

Lacson and some of the businessmen spoke at a joint news conference after the meeting, the second stage of a forum dubbed "First 100 Days Agenda for Presidential Candidates" organized by businessmen.

The business leaders who joined Lacson in meeting the reporters after the forum were former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo, Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Miguel Varela and Donald Dee.

As he was leaving the businessmen, Lacson was overheard by reporters telling them: "I'm sure you'll hear from (the President) tomorrow."

The businessmen said the opposition candidate gave them straightforward answers when he faced them at the Shangri-La Hotel.

Most urgent issue

Pardo said both Lacson and the business leaders agreed that the huge budget deficit facing the country was the most urgent issue that needed to be addressed by whoever is elected in May.

"I guess both (were) mindful of the problems that now stare at us, which are really the fiscal problem, resources that (we) are very short of if we are to cope with the demands of the government," Pardo said in an interview.

He and his business colleagues said Lacson's platform was consistent with the agenda of the forum and even went farther into the details of implementation than the businessmen had expected.

Lacson advocates good government to boost state revenues. He also calls for increased investments and taxes.

Lacson agreed with the businessmen on legalizing "jueteng," taxing text messages, cutting government pork barrel by at least half and executing death row prisoners.

What set him apart, the businessmen said, was his candidness in answering their questions on economic policy.

"The measures adopted (in the agenda) were similar to his platform of government. I guess when we went through (them) item by item, we noted the similarities," Pardo said.

'No-nonsense leadership'

Pardo noted that other candidates, like actor Fernando Poe Jr., had similar policies as those on the agenda.

Asked what made Lacson unique, Pardo said: "He has been very direct in his responses."

"I guess coming from his background, his experience in government, a no-nonsense type of leadership is what he told us he's prepared to offer, subordinating politics and concentrating on what has to be done."

Pardo said Lacson kept repeating "leadership by example ... assuring us this will be the brand of leadership you will see under a Lacson presidency."

Asked if the business leaders welcomed such a style, Pardo said: "I guess times call for strong leadership if we're to get over the hump and be able to move forward."

Dee, chair of the Employees Confederation of the Philippines, said Lacson was clear on what he intended to do but added that businessmen were still concerned about continuity in policies.

No beating around bush

"His answers were straightforward. He doesn't beat around the bush," Dee said. "On gambling, he said why shouldn't jueteng be legalized when we already have legalized gambling (with lotto and the sweepstakes draws)."

"Overall, I think Senator Ping is very clear on what he wants to do if he's given a chance to serve as president of the country."

Did Lacson succeed in convincing businessmen that he was their man?

Dee said: "The concern of most businessmen is continuity and stability. A businessmen's decision will be based on that."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, March 26, 2004
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Wis 2:1, 12-22
Gospel: Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Jesus went around Galilee; he would not go about in Judea because the Jews wanted to kill him. Now the Jewish feast of the Tents was at hand.

But after his brothers had gone to the festival, he also went up, not publicly but in secret.

Some of the people of Jerusalem said, "Is this not the man they want to kill? And here he is speaking freely, and they don't say a word to him? Can it be that the rulers know that this is really the Christ? Yet we know where this man comes from; but when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

So Jesus announced in a loud voice in the Temple court where he was teaching, "You say that you know me and know where I come from! I have not come of myself; I was sent by the One who is true, and you don't know him. I know him for I come from him and he sent me."

They would have arrested him, but no one laid hands on him because his time had not yet come.

Commentary

The Feast of Tabernacles or Tents is believed (by some scholars at least) to have been a commemoration of the forty years when the Jews wandered homeless through the desert. During the seven days of the feast they lived in tents.

It may have been an annual reminder that they came from nowhere. Where is a tent? Nowhere.

But when they settled they settled in earnest. The place where a person lived became, in a way, his or her name: Jesus of Nazareth, Mary of Magdala, Joseph of Arimathaea.

"We know where this man comes from," the people said. His identity was well pinned down. But, he said, "You say that you know me and know where I come from!" In fact, he told them, they didn't know. Nazareth was not his identity. They seemed to be equally sure of their own identity. But they came from nowhere, as the feast should have served to remind them. Certainty often conceals a vast amount of truth from us.

"I was sent by the One who is true, and you don't know him. I know him for I come from him and he sent me." This was his real identity. In our way, we too have to drop superficial identities and come to this realization.

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No ties to tax credit scam suspects, says Amatong

By Michelle V. Remo

FINANCE Secretary Juanita Amatong yesterday expressed indignation over allegations that had personal ties to the prime suspects in the multibillion-peso tax credit scam.

"There is no truth to statements that I have personal relations with them. I have never even seen the shadow of the Chingkoes," said Amatong.

The finance secretary was referring to Chingkoe couple Gloria and Faustino whose group of companies was involved in a P5.3-billion tax credit scam. The scam happened between 1992 and 1998. Amatong was the executive director of the One Stop Shop Credit and Duty Drawback Center (OSS) from 1992 to 1995.

Amatong said her accusers were trying to make the public believe that she or other high-ranking government officials had a hand in implicating tax scam witness Ernesto Hiansen to silence him.

Hiansen, the current executive director of the OSS, blew the whistle on the recently discovered P24-million tax credit scam. The OSS is under the Department of Finance.

"Beware of these people because they are trying to cover up their own mess," the finance secretary said.

Amatong was referring to Alberto Salanga, former OSS executive director who had said the finance chief had ties to tax scam suspects Antonio Belicena and the Chingkoes.

Wedding sponsor

Salanga noted that Amatong, along with the Chingkoe couple, was one of those who stood as sponsors in the wedding of Belicen's daughter.

Salanga accused Amatong but supported Hiansen, who, according to the former OSS executive director, was one of those who could shed light on the scandal.

Hiansen, however, is facing charges at the Office of the Ombudsman for signing fraudulent tax credit certificates in connection with the P24-million tax credit scam. He said the charge was unfair because he was the one who helped expose the scam.

Amatong earlier said she would set to the bottom of the controversy.

Forged signatures

Asked to comment on the alleged role of Hiansen in the tax scam, Amatong said there was a machine in the OSS that could detect fake tax credit certificates. Her statement cast doubts on Hiansen's claim that he had signed the TCCs not knowing they were fraudulent.

But Hiansen said the machine could only detect fake TCCs. He explained that the TCCs in the P24-million tax scam were authentic, but had forged signatures and tampered serial numbers.

Salanga lashed out at Amatong's statement, saying the finance chief was not sympathetic to Hiansen because of her ties to the tax scam suspects.

Belicena was a former finance undersecretary, who signed tax credit certificates. At a 1999 Senate hearing on the tax credit scam, Belicena said it was Amatong who delegated to him the signing of TCCs in her behalf.

Dial 117 to nab illegal recruiters

By Nelson Forte Flores

HAVE YOU been victimized by an illegal recruiter?

Or do you know of someone who preys on trusting simple people, promising them high-paying but nonexistent jobs abroad while pocketing their money?

If you do, just dial 117.

The Department of Interior and Local Government said special hotline will take reports from the public on the illegal activities of recruiters for local and foreign jobs and other forms of exploitive and hazardous human trafficking, Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. yesterday said.

"With this new development, 117 will not only lead the way for the prevention of crimes and arrest of criminals, it will also serve as an effective tool in going after illegal recruiters who have made money at the expense of Filipinos who just want to seek greener pastures abroad."

Lina said actions taken against illegal recruiters would be coordinated with Labor Secretary and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration chair Patricia Sto. Tomas.

Under the agreement, the DILG shall immediately refer to the labor department and the POEA any information received regarding illegal recruiters and human traffickers.

The Philippine National Police will also be furnished with the report for appropriate action.

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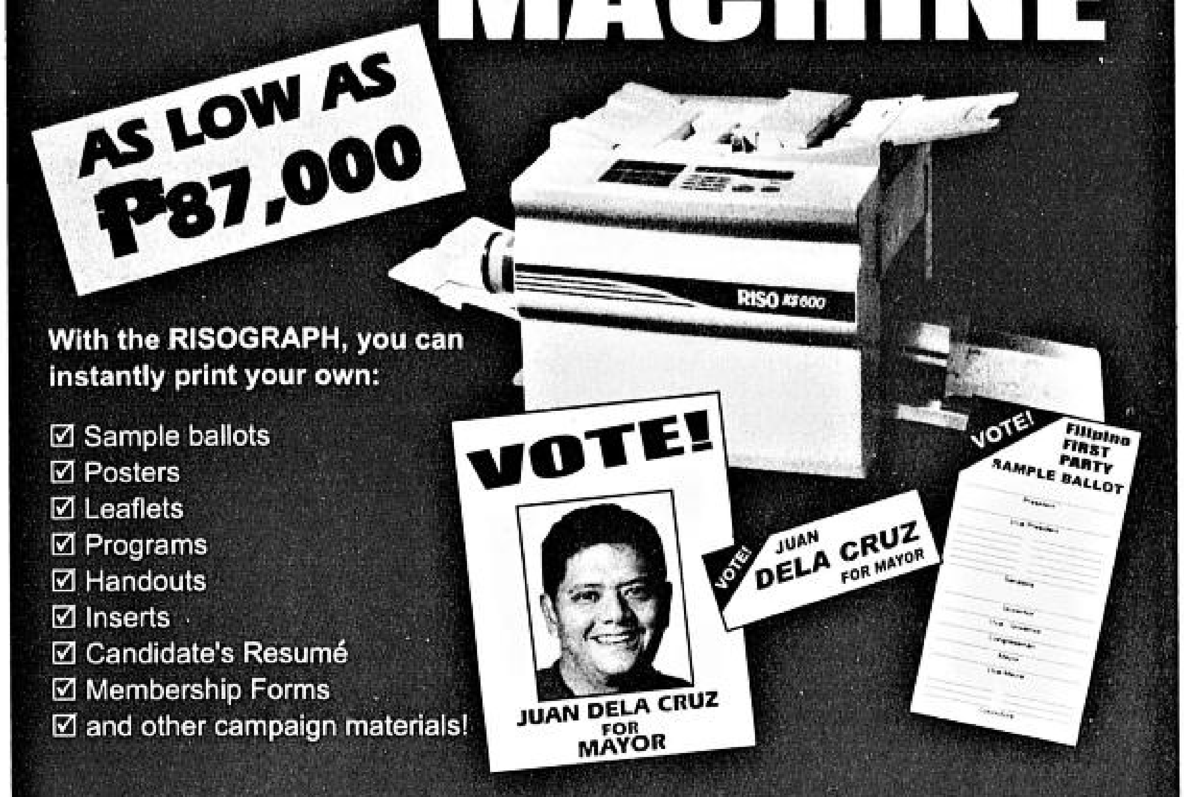
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SARS boosts fight against TB

THE OUTBREAK of SARS in Asia boosted efforts to fight infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis, which kills 1,000 people in the Western Pacific daily, the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday.

In many countries in the region, SARS resulted in renewed attention to public health issues and in particular to the control of infectious diseases, WHO regional director Shigeru Omi said in a statement.

This led to a substantial increase in resources available to address SARS and other public health threats, such as tuberculosis (TB), he said.

"SARS could indirectly help us fight TB since greater resources for the surveillance and control of infectious diseases mean we can find and cure more of the two million TB sufferers in our region," he said.

The statement, released by the WHO regional headquarters in Manila, said TB killed 1,000 people in the Western Pacific region every day, with 5,500 people developing the illness daily.

The pneumonia-like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) killed almost 800 people in 32 countries in a 2002-2003 outbreak, infecting about 8,000. There is still no cure or vaccine for the disease.

The WHO seeks to detect at least 70 percent of the people in the region with tuberculosis and expand access to the WHO-approved "directly observed, short-course" treatment, known as DOTS.

Many Asian countries have high rates of TB with low access to DOTS, the statement said, singling out China as facing "a major test."

China, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vietnam are among the countries with high rates of TB, it said. *AFP*

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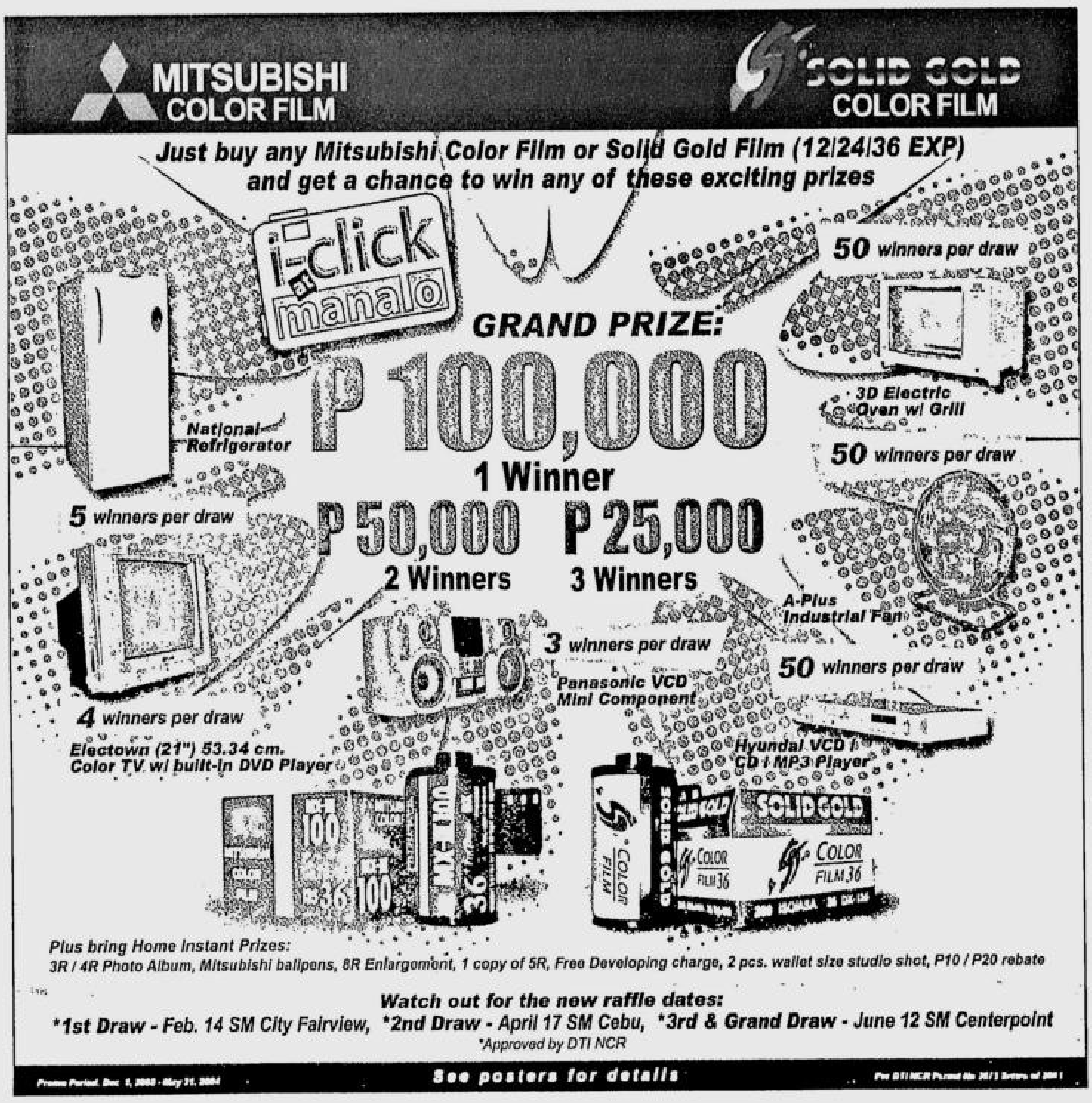

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Peso drops to record low of 56.45 to $1

From page A1

Intervention by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, however, enabled the peso to close at 56.42 at the Philippine Dealing System, still six centavos off its previous record closing low of 56.38 on Friday. Volume rose to $160 million from $117.5 million on Friday.

According to traders, the BSP sold about $30 million at the spot market. BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura declined to comment on the central bank's reported intervention.

Deficits

"Peso weakness seems to be driven by a combination of concerns over the upcoming election and also the recent balance of payments deficit numbers," said Peter Redward, currency strategist with Deutsche Bank.

"The recent sovereign issue should help provide stability," Redward said, referring to the $500 million bond that the country sold this month.

There were also concerns over the January trade deficit hitting $336 million, almost double that in January 2003.

Buenaventura said the peso's fall to a new record low was due to a confluence of factors.

"To me, it is a combination of weak regionals, month-end demand, concern on weak exports and trade, the BOP (balance of payment) deficit and then some unverified report about the lower revenues of the government," he said.

Corporate demand

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco said there was a huge corporate demand for dollars, particularly from the oil, manufacturing and power sectors.

"But OFW (overseas Filipino worker) remittances and other exporters' dollar sales provided support to the peso," Tetangco said.

Traders said the peso took a beating amid reports that the country's gross international reserves could fall to as low as $14 billion by year's end from $16.87 billion as of the end of 2003.

"The peso will further weaken until the May presidential elections are over," a trader said, adding the local currency could hit 57 against the greenback in April or May.

The BSP, for its part, is banking on a seasonal increase in foreign exchange inflows from exports and OFW remittances starting in April.

Buenaventura said the central bank's projection that gross international reserves would fall to $14-$15 billion was no cause for alarm. He said the projection was in line with the BSP's target of a balance of payments deficit of $600 million this year.

Balance of payments

The balance of payments measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trade in goods and services as well as transfers, while the capital and financial account records loan transactions, investment flows, short-term capital and other related items.

Any transaction that gives rise to a payment by a Philippine resident for imports or offshore investment is considered a deficit item, while any transaction that gives rise to a receipt like exports, an inward remittance and investment is a surplus item.

The Philippines incurred a balance of payments shortfall of $227 million in February, bringing the two-month deficit to $822 million. Meager foreign exchange inflows were wiped out by heavy outflows for debt service.

"We are just saying that even at $14 billion, it is a comfortable GIR (gross international reserves) level. It could give us buffer in the event the BOP (balance of payments) does not pick up in the second half. But the targeted (GIR) is still $15 billion, for import cover and for residual (debt) maturity," Buenaventura said.

The central bank also expects OFW remittances to slow down this year and fewer Filipinos to find work abroad due to the stiff competition from other developing countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in foreign job markets.

OFW remittances

Through the years, the Philippines has been relying on huge remittances from OFWs to boost domestic consumer demand. In 2003, OFW remittances pumped $7.64 billion into the domestic economy, 6.3 percent higher than in 2002.

This year, the BSP expects OFW remittances to grow by only 3 percent this year to $7.83 billion.

A slowdown in OFW remittances and a smaller surplus in the current account this year are expected to result in lower gross international reserves.

The current account surplus is expected to shrink to $1.14 billion from $3.35 billion last year due to a slowdown in OFW remittances and an increase in the trade deficit to about $1.8 billion from $1.25 billion last year.

Although export receipts are seen to rebound by 10 percent to $38.56 billion this year from a measly growth of 1.4 percent last year, imports are seen to grow at a faster pace of 11 percent to $40.35 billion from a growth of 6.3 percent last year. *With reports from Reuters and AP*

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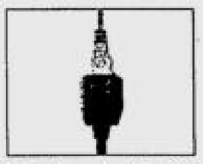
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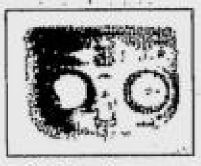
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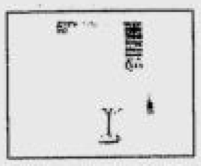
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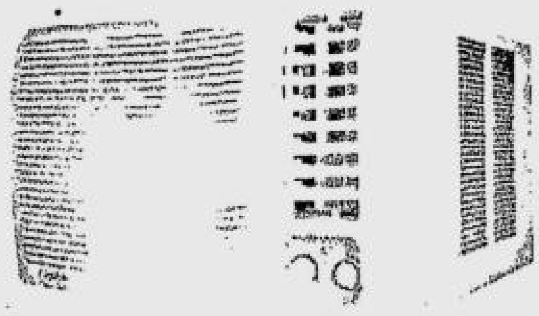

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Loren slams bailout of Lopez water firm

From page A1

Others said consumers would shoulder the cost of the takeover through higher water rates. True enough, Eduardo Santos of the state regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) said yesterday that water rates would have to be raised to help cover the debts that Maynilad did not pay.

"We have to go back to the drawing board to determine the rate increase," Santos said.

Presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson called the plan of the government to take over the water utility a sellout. "It's unconscionable," he said.

Lacson asked business leaders to protest the government takeover.

"This clearly placed the government, if not the consumers, in a disadvantageous position," he said at a joint news conference with business leaders behind the First 100 Days Agenda for presidential candidates.

Giveaway

Without naming but obviously referring to the Lopezes, Legarda said the deal was an "outright giveaway to private interests of public money."

"The poor Filipino taxpayer and water consumers are being cooked in their own fat just to favor the private owners of Maynilad," she said in a statement.

"This is made obvious by the fact that the new head of Maynilad is Fiorello 'Toto' Estuar, president of a construction company owned by Benpres, holding company of Maynilad," she said.

Legarda earlier steered clear of hitting the Lopezes, who were said to be supporting President Macapagal-Arroyo, one of the five presidential candidates.

Concession

Administration critics have claimed that the bailout is one of the government's concessions to the Lopezes in exchange for allowing another former ABS-CBN newsreader, Sen. Noli de Castro, to run as the vice presidential candidate of Ms Macapagal.

Over the weekend, Legarda limited her criticism of the Maynilad deal to the culpability of Malacañang.

But Legarda crossed the line yesterday by pointing out the bottom line for the Lopezes in the deal.

She said the agreement in which the government would take over 61 percent of Maynilad's equity also meant that Maynilad would not pay P8 billion in concession fees to the government.

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MEMBERS of the Freedom from Debt Coalition denounce the government's plan to take over the financially troubled Maynilad Water Services during a press conference in Quezon City. Invoking the people's right to water, they demanded transparency in the government's negotiations with the water firm controlled by the Lopez family. JOAN BONDOC

The government would also shoulder Maynilad's other debts totaling P10 billion.

Legarda noted that Maynilad was ordered last year by a Paris-based arbitration group to pay the government P8 billion in unpaid concession fees (payments for the foreign debt assumed by Maynilad from the MWSS when it won the bidding in 1997 to operate the west zone of Metro Manila).

"But instead of collecting the money, the government agreed to forego the debt in favor of a paper transaction, with the government also ending up with an additional debt burden of P10 billion owed by Maynilad to other creditors," the senator said.

Ambition

Without naming De Castro but obviously referring to his having been drafted as Ms Macapagal's running mate, Legarda said the deal was "in exchange for whatever Ms Macapagal wants to boost her presidential bid."

She said the deal was approved in the "relentless pursuit of the President's inordinate ambition to be elected to her own term of office in the May 10 election."

One of sorry cases

For his part, House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla said the bailout was just one of the sorry cases of corporate thuggery under the Macapagal administration.

Padilla, a senatorial candidate of Lacson, said the administration had also tried to grab the telecommunications business set up by Pacifico Marcelo.

He recalled that during the Senate hearing on the issue, Marcelo was ushered into Malacañang through the back door where he was offered a deal that he refused.

As a result, Padilla said, Marcelo was persecuted by Malacañang which led to the scuttling of his toll scheme for international calls.

Another proof, he said, was what happened to the Piatco group which could have succeeded in operating the almost-completed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 had it agreed to the demands of the President's "cronies" who wanted to control the firm. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana and Norman Bordadora*

No gov't bailout of Maynilad—Lopez

From page A1

Waterworks Sewerage System) and not to the shareholders," she said in a speech at the unveiling of a water distribution project in Barangay Gulod, Novaliches, Quezon City, which is part of Maynilad's concession area.

The President said the government won its case before an international arbitration panel which ordered Maynilad's investors to pay their obligations to the MWSS.

"Whatever money is involved in the deal, it will not go to just one shareholder. It will go to the MWSS and Maynilad and they will be the ones who will invest in the water distribution lines that the public needs," she said.

A Paris-based international arbitration panel had ruled that Maynilad, which unilaterally decided to terminate its contract two years ago, should pay concession fees to the government amounting to P8 billion—P7.1 billion from March 2001 to end-2003, and P903 million from January to May this year.

The panel also allowed the MWSS to tap Maynilad's performance bond of $120 million should its shareholders fail to pay the concession fees on time.

Under the compromise deal, the MWSS will get $50 million of the $120-million performance bond in cash and convert the unpaid portion of the concession fees (more than P5 billion) into equity in Maynilad.

Lopez pointed out that the MWSS-Maynilad agreement took months to hammer out and involved not just Benpres but more than 20 creditor banks. The deal has yet to be approved by the receiver and the court.

Whipping boy

Lopez complained that his family had often been made a convenient whipping boy for its participation in utilities.

"We have too seldom been recognized for the good that we have done. We are proud to have accomplished much in Maynilad in the last six-and-a-half years. We are not leaving a desolate and financially unsound company as the misinformed wish to believe, and definitely there was no mismanagement of the water utility," the Benpres chair said.

Lopez said Maynilad could have pursued the rehabilitation case in court that could have dragged on for years. But he said this would have risked the quality of water service delivery to more than half of Metro Manila's population.

Maynilad agreed instead to sacrifice shareholder interest by reorganizing to address both government and creditor issues, he said.

Lopez noted that Maynilad's sustainability as a business enterprise had been substantially eroded by huge foreign exchange losses and its difficulty in getting rate increases that would reflect the true cost of delivering potable water to its customers.

"The write-off of shareholder equity eliminated Maynilad's accumulated losses and gave a level of protection to consumers from what would otherwise have been drastic increases in tariff rates," he said.

In addition to writing off Benpres' equity investment to put Maynilad on healthy financial footing, Lopez said Maynilad had improved water service in the west zone because of the following:

- Paid more than $200 million out of $800 million in concession loans assumed from MWSS, before stopping payments in 2001.
- Implemented P4.3 billion in capital projects.
- Connected 194,098 new consumers to the network, 74,266 of them among the urban poor through its ground-breaking BayanTubig program; water service connections as of end-2003 numbered 585,989.
- Improved coverage to 85 percent of the population in the franchise area from 63 percent.

Reverse privatization

Ms Macapagal said she approved the reverse privatization of Maynilad because she realized the importance of having a stable and clean supply of water in the lives of ordinary Filipinos who have been hankering for better service from utility firms.

"We can do without electricity but it is difficult to live without water. That is why we are rehabilitating Maynilad," the President said.

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, a stock analyst and informal adviser of the President, said the deal was "certainly not the best but it it is an acceptable and feasible option given the circumstance."

Salceda said the government had the option to initiate arbitration procedures for the termination of the agreement with Maynilad, but this would have meant going through a lengthy court battle with no clear outcome or date of resolution.

Practical solution

An investment banker who requested anonymity said the deal was "the most practical solution" to the President's desire of ensuring the survival of Maynilad while getting a chance to recover the P8 billion in unpaid concession fees.

Another issue weighing down the deal is the P10 billion worth of obligations racked up by Maynilad with local and international banks.

Salceda said that under the deal, these loans would be paid entirely out of the earnings of Maynilad and not from government coffers as feared by critics of the deal.

He said the Lopez family would also get a big hit from the deal as it would suffer a total write-off of P3.8 billion and lose its 60-percent control of Maynilad. *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Gloria admits guesting on Dolphy's TV show

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

AFTER SAYING she did not even know comedy king Dolphy's show, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday admitted that she had guested on "Home Along Da Riles" after all.

"As I said, even if I came out in the show 'Home Along Da Riles,' that was a long time ago and I'm not aware of the shows now because I don't have time to watch television," the President said in an interview over ABS-CBN's TV Patrol last night.

It was a modification of the President's response on Sunday in Iloilo City when she was asked at a press conference if Malacañang had pressured the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN into axing the show of Dolphy who is actively campaigning for opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. "Certainly not. In the first place, I did not even know he had a show," was her response.

In the TV interview, the President denied allegations that the government takeover of Maynilad Water Services from a Lopez company and the impending termination of Dolphy's show on the network were part of a deal with the Lopezes for allowing their prize talent, Sen. Noli de Castro, to be her running mate in the May election.

Ms Macapagal also denied charges of anomalies in the LRT project.

"That is not true. First of all, the Dolphy issue is a corporate matter of ABS-CBN and I have nothing to do with that," she said.

"My administration does not meddle in corporate matters and I do not engage in mudslinging being done by the opposition. I hope that instead of mudslinging, the opposition would disclose their platform of government because we have not heard about it up to now," she said.

She said she did not hold any grudge against Dolphy for supporting her principal opponent.

"No. Because everyone has a right to support who he wants to support and I am happy that the people are beginning to understand that elections are about knowing the plans of candidates on how to run the government," she said.

Erap: Show biz personalities backing Dolphy

From page A1

ABS-CBN, but he isn't sitting quietly at home, hiding from the world. He is busier than ever.

Campaign jingle

The comedy king yesterday recorded a campaign jingle for Poe in different local languages.

He will soon be seen in TV ads and heard on radio, along with Artista Para Kay FPJ chair Richard Gomez and actor-comedian Vic Sotto.

Titled "May Bagong Umagang Parating," the jingle will be aired next week. Written by award-winning composer Mike Villegas, it is only one of three songs Poe is using in his campaign.

Comedian Joey de Leon recorded "Pinoy si Poe" with Sotto. "Go FPJ" was sung by actors Christopher de Leon, Edgar Mortiz and Tirso Cruz III.

Dolphy met with Poe last night.

Poe reportedly canceled a press conference with entertainment reporters Monday night so he could have a "private moment with Dolphy," a source close to the Quizon (Dolphy's surname) family said.

"Ronnie (Poe's nickname) is worried," the source said on Monday. "He feels guilty for being the reason Dolphy lost his TV show."

Must win

The source added that before the falling out with ABS-CBN, Dolphy used to attend only rallies in major cities across the country. Now, he is willing to join even the smallest *palengke* (market) tour.

"*Kailangang kailangang manalo si FPJ* (FPJ must win)," the source quoted Dolphy as saying.

In fact, he is all set to join Poe in a campaign sortie starting this Friday when the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) heads for Cebu.

Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's campaign manager, said the KNP was expecting Dolphy in its next trip to Cebu and Bohol.

"Dolphy told us he wanted to join us in Cebu," Sotto said in a phone interview. So far, he said, the PNP had not received word that the top comedian and good friend of Poe had changed his mind.

Controversial appearance

If Dolphy does appear in Cebu and campaigns for Poe, this could spark another controversy following reports that his TV show, "Home Along Da Airport," had been axed by ABS-CBN.

Dolphy has so far remained quiet about the reports. On Sunday, the broadcasting giant confirmed that its management had started preliminary talks with the top comedian on the fate of his TV show.

The last time Dolphy attended a Poe campaign sortie was last month in Bicol.

KNP leaders and its national candidates will start campaigning for their local candidates this week. The local election campaign begins Thursday.

Reelectionist Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. is expected to be in Cagayan de Oro City, while another senatorial candidate, Amina Rasul, will be in Muslim Mindanao, according to Sotto.

On Thursday, the KNP will hold proclamation rallies for its mayoral candidates—Mel Lopez in Manila, Ismael Mathay in Quezon City and Peewee Trinidad in Pasay City.

Estrada's rest house: A villa or just a hut?

From page A1

in Tanay, Rizal, is an 11-room "villa." But defense lawyers—dapper in their designer suits—would rather call it a "small hut."

"It is a small hut measuring 16 by 20 meters in floor area," retired Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Manuel Pamaran, one of Estrada's court-appointed lawyers, said of the controversial rest house.

In yesterday's hearing on a motion for Estrada to be transferred to his 15-16 hectare vacation estate across from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, prosecution and defense lawyers quibbled over how to describe the place.

Seeking to downplay the cool comforts which Estrada would enjoy in the rest house, Pamaran first called the estate a "youth camp" with a military barracks because it is sometimes used by campers and soldiers in training.

When Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario, who is also first division chair, asked if Estrada wanted to roam free in the property, defense lawyer Jose Flaminiano said the former President only intended to use it as his detention quarters.

Pamaran argued the area was "less than a hectare ... just small," drawing murmurs from reporters and court employees attending the session.

On-site inspection

Hearing this, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio told the court that if Estrada's rest house was small, as the defense claimed, then there was no point in transferring him from Camp Capinpin—a bigger place.

Villa-Ignacio told reporters later there might be a need for prosecutors to inspect the resort. He said Estrada and his allies sometimes referred to it as a "one-room" bungalow, at other times an 11-room villa.

Earlier, Estrada told the INQUIRER that his rest house was a one-room unit, with a swimming pool. In another interview, he said he preferred to have big houses and that in some of his houses, his bathroom alone was bigger than his detention quarters at the military camp.

Villa-Ignacio reiterated the danger in the defense motion to give the police and the anti-graft court "jurisdiction and control" over Estrada's rest house in exchange for allowing him to stay there.

"This is not legally possible," he said.

Nazario turned to defense lawyers and said: "Why don't you just donate the property to the government?"

Donating the property to the state could be the only solution to the legal issue, she said.

Villa-Ignacio agreed, saying a "deed of donation" could be attached to Estrada's motion.

Pamaran said after the hearing that he wished Nazario's remark was a mere "slip of the tongue."

"That amounts to blackmailing the accused Estrada to give something to gain something from this government," he said, adding that the matter could also be viewed as a form of "bribery."

Compassion for others

A former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines urged the government to extend the same compassion it had shown Estrada to all other prisoners.

Pangasinan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said justice and compassion should come hand in hand. If given to one person, it should also be given to another.

Justice states that if Estrada is allowed house arrest, then "prisoners languishing in jail for lesser crimes should be accorded the same privilege," Cruz said.

He said other prisoners in even worse shape than Estrada had never had access to the same medical treatment the former President was getting.

Two lawmakers of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats called on Estrada to show the government some appreciation for allowing him to visit his ailing mother last week.

Bulacan Representatives Reylina Nicolas and Lorna Silverio said in a joint statement that "although Estrada is a staunch supporter of Ms Macapagal's main challenger, actor Fernando Poe Jr., the administration has managed to accord (Estrada) a fair trial and humane treatment befitting a former national leader."

They stopped short of asking Estrada not to campaign for Poe. *With reports from Blanche S. Rivera and Carlito Pablo*

Bishop notes return of 'jueteng'

By Blanche S. Rivera

AN ARCHBISHOP leading the Catholic Church's crusade against "jueteng" has noted a resurgence of the illegal numbers game all over the country following the start of the campaign period in February.

Pangasinan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said there was a lull in jueteng operations last December when Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane declared that he would eliminate jueteng.

"It stopped in most places for some time but now it is back. It is connected definitely with the elections. Jueteng can make or unmake candidates, especially local politicians," Cruz said in a recent press briefing at the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

Cruz, who heads the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng (Krusada), challenged all presidential and vice presidential candidates to promise in writing they would work for the eradication of jueteng if elected.

Cruz has sent letters to President Macapagal-Arroyo, actor Fernando Poe Jr., Sen. Panfilo Lacson, former Sen. Raul Roco and evangelist Eddie Villanueva to ask them to make such a commitment.

"We need all the help of upright people who can join us in promoting the cause... but if you would rather not commit yourself for one reason or another, the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng would understand," the letter read.

Cruz said he was giving the candidates until April 15 to make a reply.

Cruz, a former CBCP chair, said that those who would not give their word of honor in writing would be considered pro-jueteng.

The people would decide on the relevance of such stance on election day, he said.

Cruz lamented that the Macapagal administration's efforts to rid the country of jueteng did not go beyond the PNP's declaration of war against the numbers racket.

"It does not require guns and bullets to fight jueteng, just political will and commitment," Cruz said.

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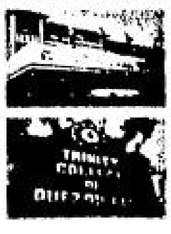

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Envoy is women's guest speaker

SRI LANKAN Ambassador to the Philippines Ariya Bandara Rekawa will be the guest speaker and inducting officer when the Women's Rights Movement of the Philippines (WRMP) inducts its new set of officers and directors on March 25 at the Skyline World Trade Center, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City, at 6:30 p.m.

WRMP officers for 2004-06 are Villa Granada de Guia, reelected president; Dr. Carmencita T. Aguilar, vice president for Luzon; Nelia Sancho, vice president for Visayas; Lourdes LL. Pimentel, vice president for Mindanao; Dr. Jana V. Mora, board secretary; Dr. Lilia Palanca, assistant board secretary; Leonida Bayani Ortiz, treasurer; Norma J. Lozano, assistant treasurer; Dr. Ramona Raneses, auditor, and Elsie B. De-Veyra, PRO. Directors are Sylvia Inciong, Josefina Parilla, Lourdes C. Quezon, Dr. Martha Taylor and Margie Vitug. Maramanai Rakiin is the representative for Muslim women, while Judge Aurora Recina is the group's adviser.

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  Industry Speaker: Mr. Ed Gallor – Unilex Corporation
- Manufacturing Execution Strategies Operations Tactics
  Panelist: Mr. Antonio Jopson – Testech Inc.
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  Mr. Napoleon Dagdagan – RFM Corporation
  Mr. Norman Camungol – Automation & System Resource, Inc.
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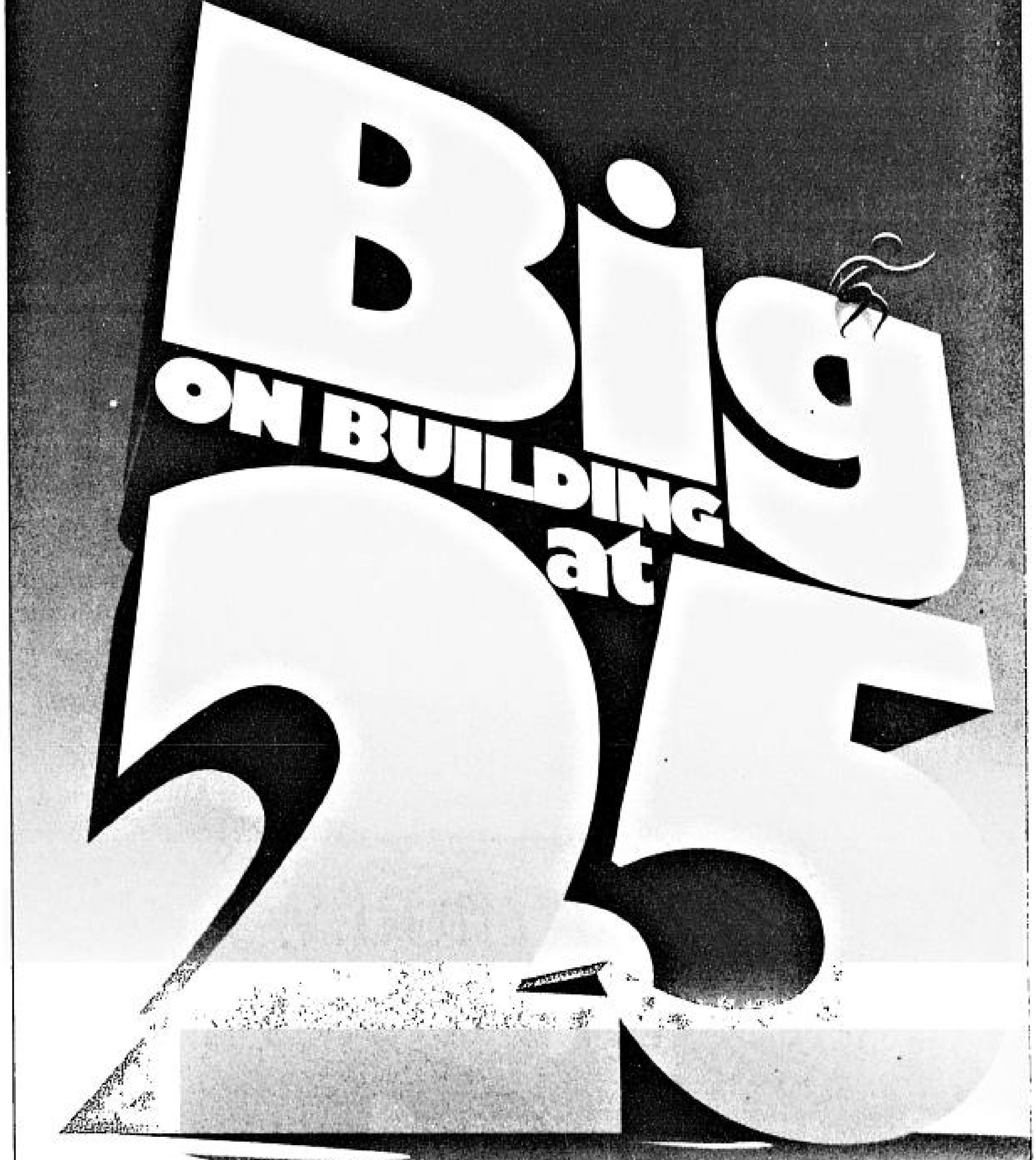

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CAMPI

A public service information drive of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines, Inc. and Philippine Automotive Association in support of the

NO PLATES, NO TRAVEL POLICY

PAA Philippine Automotive Association

Background

NAKTF identified the reinvigoration of the implementation of the "NO PLATES, NO TRAVEL" POLICY as prescribed by Republic Act (RA) 4136 or "The Land Transportation and Traffic Code". RA 4136 clearly states, "No motor vehicles shall be used or operated on or upon any public highway of the Philippines unless the same is properly registered for the current year."

General Guidelines

a. The Land Transportation Office (LTO) shall be the lead agency in the implementation of the " No Plates, No Travel" Policy. Implementing units shall include the LTO, PNP Traffic Management Group (PNP TMG) and the MMDA Traffic Enforcement Group (TEG).

b. The provisions set in RA 4136 or "The Land Transportation and Traffic Code" shall act as the overall guidance in the implementation of the policy. Other pertinent laws and other issuances presently enforced in relation thereto shall continue to steer the conduct of the implementation, unless otherwise revised/repealed.

c. The " No Plates, No Travel" Policy shall be enforced initially in NCR, region 3 and region 4 beginning March 10, 2004.

d. Strict adherence to Human Rights shall be emphasized in all undertakings.

e. The NAKTF Chief shall exercise overall supervision in the implementation.

Procedural Guidelines

a. It is NAKTF's primary intention in the reinvigoration of the "No Plates, No Travel" Policy to check vehicles with the following liabilities but continue to travel the streets, as they may easily be used in criminal activities:

- Without License Plates
- With Expired Conduction Stickers
- Government Vehicles Without License Plates
- Owned by Government Officials Without Plates
- With Fake Plates
- With Illegally transferred Plates
- With Unauthorized Plates
- With Unauthorized Commemorative Plates
- With Expired Commemorative Plates

b. The following procedures should apply in the implementation of the "No Plates, No Travel" Policy.

- **Vehicles without plates that do not have the necessary documentation** (Official Receipt / Certificate Of Registration) shall be **IMPOUNDED** by the apprehending law enforcers.
- **Vehicles using Conduction Stickers but have original customer's copy of Sales Invoice and/or Delivery Receipt** shall be given a **WARNING/REMINDER** to complete the registration of the vehicles before driving them on the road. Final regulation governing conduction stickers shall be implemented upon approval of the Department order pertaining to its usage.
- **Vehicles that have been issued license plates but continue to use conduction stickers or intentionally remove the same** shall be **FINED** in accordance with the provisions of RA4136. Law enforcers shall make notations on the documents presented by accosted motorists to minimize their inconvenience and for the reference of subsequent accosting law enforcers.
- **In special cases,** the movement of vehicles from dealer to dealer, dealer to showroom, dealer to warehouse, dealer to factory, the documents required are gate pass with specific destination, driver's license and authorized company ID.
- **Motorcycles without license plates shall not be impounded until April 15, 2004,** provided they have proper documentation (Official Receipt / Certificate Of Registration).

c. Utmost courtesy should be observed among law enforcers.

d. The inspection of documents should be as brief as possible to avoid inconveniencing motorists and obstructing the continuous flow of traffic.

We request for the public to fully support the implementation of the "No Plates, No Travel" Policy.

ANGELO T. REYES
Presidential Adviser and Chief, NAKTF

Cut page and keep in glove compartment for guidance and strict compliance.

South Korea confirms new bird flu case

YANGJU, South Korea—South Korea confirmed its first case of bird flu for more than a month on Monday, dashing hopes it had seen the last of an epidemic that has ravaged poultry flocks and killed 24 people across Asia.

The outbreak—discovered at the weekend at a chicken farm in Kyonggi province near Seoul—was the first new case since Feb. 5 and 16,000 poultry birds at the affected farm were destroyed on Sunday, the agriculture ministry said.

Officials kept up the cull on Monday, scrambling to pick up live birds, stuff them in bags and then hit the sacks with spades. The bags were then being buried on a nearby mountainside.

The aim is to destroy 400,000 chickens and ducks within a three-km radius of the affected farm, officials said.

Agriculture Minister Huh Sang-man visited the area on Monday and called for thorough disinfection to contain the outbreak, the ministry said in a statement.

"One farm located in the city of Yangju has tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza," it said. Yangju is about 40 km north of the capital, Seoul.

Farms within a radius of 30 km to 40 km would be checked twice a day for new outbreaks.

Before the latest discovery, South Korea had destroyed nearly five million poultry birds and confirmed outbreaks at 19 farms across the country since early December.

Certain strains of bird flu can be fatal to humans, although South Korea has had no human deaths.

The strain of bird flu in the country was different from the type that killed people in Vietnam and Thailand, South Korea said last month, citing tests by a US disease control agency.

The ministry said more than 2,000 chickens shipped from the affected farm to a slaughterhouse south of Seoul would be killed.

The virulent H5N1 avian flu virus had also been found in a magpie captured and tested in the southern city of Yangsan, where an outbreak was reported in January. But it was not expected to pose a significant threat as the incubation period was short in magpies, the ministry added. *Reuters*

Israel kills Hamas founder; all-out war vowed in revenge

SPIRITUAL leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement Sheikh Ahmed Yassin attending a rally in Gaza City Sept. 23, 1998. Sheikh Yassin was killed in an Israeli helicopter strike as he left a mosque in the Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City March 22. Two of Sheikh Yassin's assistants and a passer-by were also killed in the attack. AFP

GAZA CITY—Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was killed Monday in an Israeli helicopter strike in Gaza City, prompting the radical Islamist movement he founded to declare all-out war on the Jewish state in revenge.

The 67-year-old wheelchair-bound cleric was killed along with seven other Palestinians when a helicopter fired three missiles as he left a mosque in the Sabra quarter of the city, witnesses and security sources said.

Two of his bodyguards and his son-in-law were among the victims, sources said at Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital, where an AFP correspondent saw Yassin's body.

Israel had made little secret of its intention to eliminate the leadership of Hamas in the aftermath of a twin suicide bombing in the southern port of Ashdod last week, claimed by both Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

Deputy Defense Minister Zeev Boim, in the first Israeli reaction to the strike, said Yassin deserved to die for his part in the deaths of hundreds of Israelis since the start of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000.

"Sheikh Yassin deserved to die for all the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas," Boim told public radio.

Yassin's was the highest-profile targeted killing by Israeli forces since the start of the uprising three and half years ago.

Boim hinted that more attacks on Palestinian militant leaders were possible, warning that "no terrorist leader will be immune."

Confirming the death, Israeli Army spokesperson Maj. Sharon Feingold said Yassin had been "responsible for numerous murderous terror attacks, resulting in the deaths of many civilians, both Israeli and foreign."

"The Hamas leadership, led by Yassin, was directly involved in planning, directing and launching terror attacks carried out by the organization," she said.

Following the attack, Israel completely closed down the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, she added.

Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, vowed to kill "hundreds" of Israelis in retaliation.

"Those who have taken the decision to kill Sheikh Yassin have signed the death warrant for hundreds of Zionists," said a statement received by AFP.

The statement also hinted that revenge attacks would be carried out against US targets.

"The Zionists would not have perpetrated such an act without obtaining the green light from the terrorist American administration and it must assume responsibility for this crime," it added.

Hamas' political leader in the Gaza Strip, Abdulaziz Rantissi, made a declaration of war in the aftermath of the strike.

"War is henceforth open with these murderers, these criminals and these terrorists," Rantissi told the Gulf-based satellite channel Al-Arabiya.

"They know it's opened, there will be no revenge, it's an open war," he added in English, warning the Israelis they would not enjoy peace.

"Inside Palestine, there will be no security for the Zionists and Jews," Rantissi vowed to a background of chants from hundreds of supporters calling for jihad, or holy war.

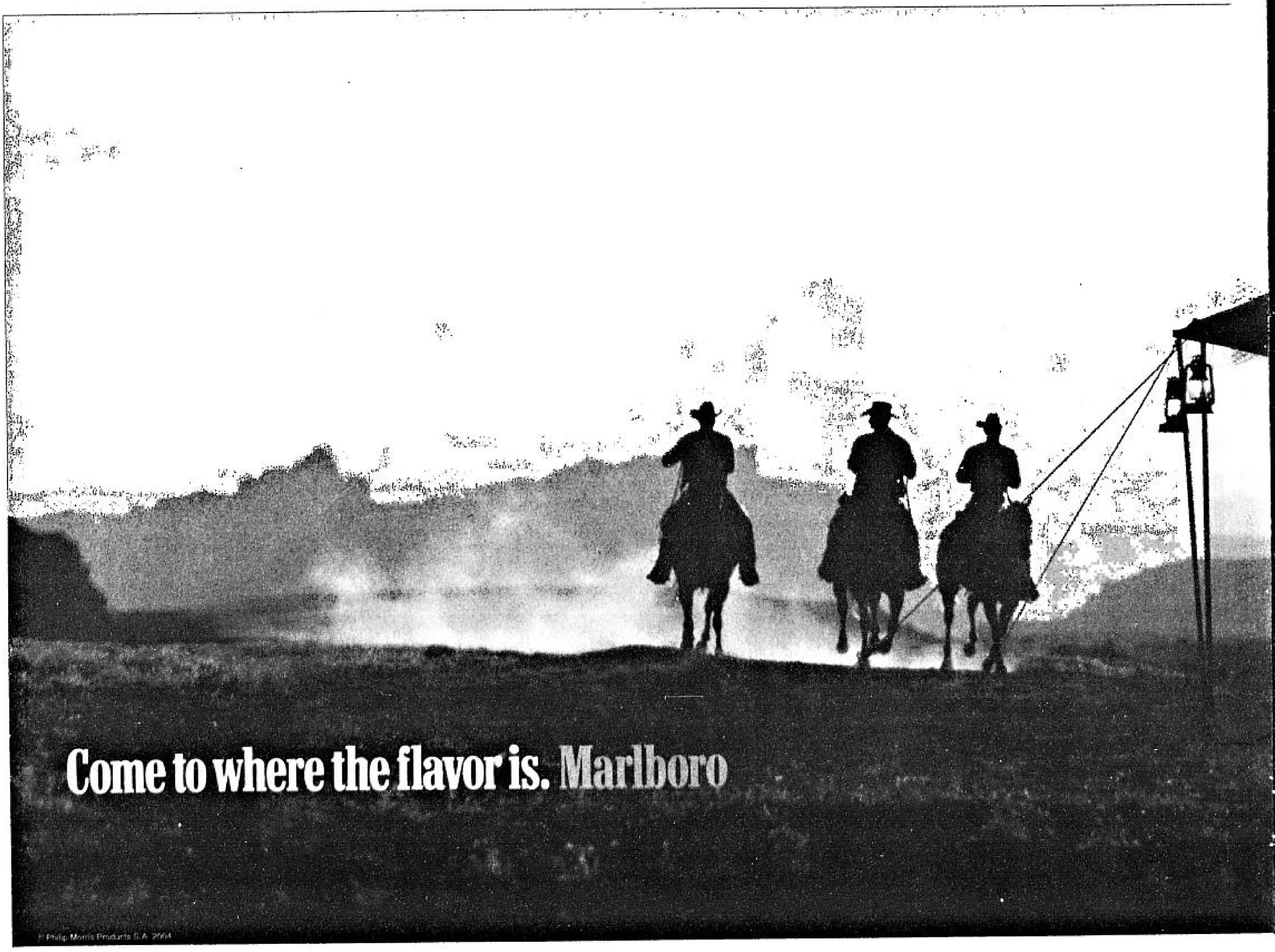
Thousands of Palestinians poured onto the streets of Gaza in the aftermath of the strike, marching toward Yassin's home.

Thousands more took to the streets in the West Bank, calling for revenge.

Many set fire to tires, blanketing the skies above Gaza in thick black smoke, an AFP correspondent reported.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat condemned the assassination, and called for three days of mourning.

Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurei denounced the killing as a "big and atrocious crime." **AFP**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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

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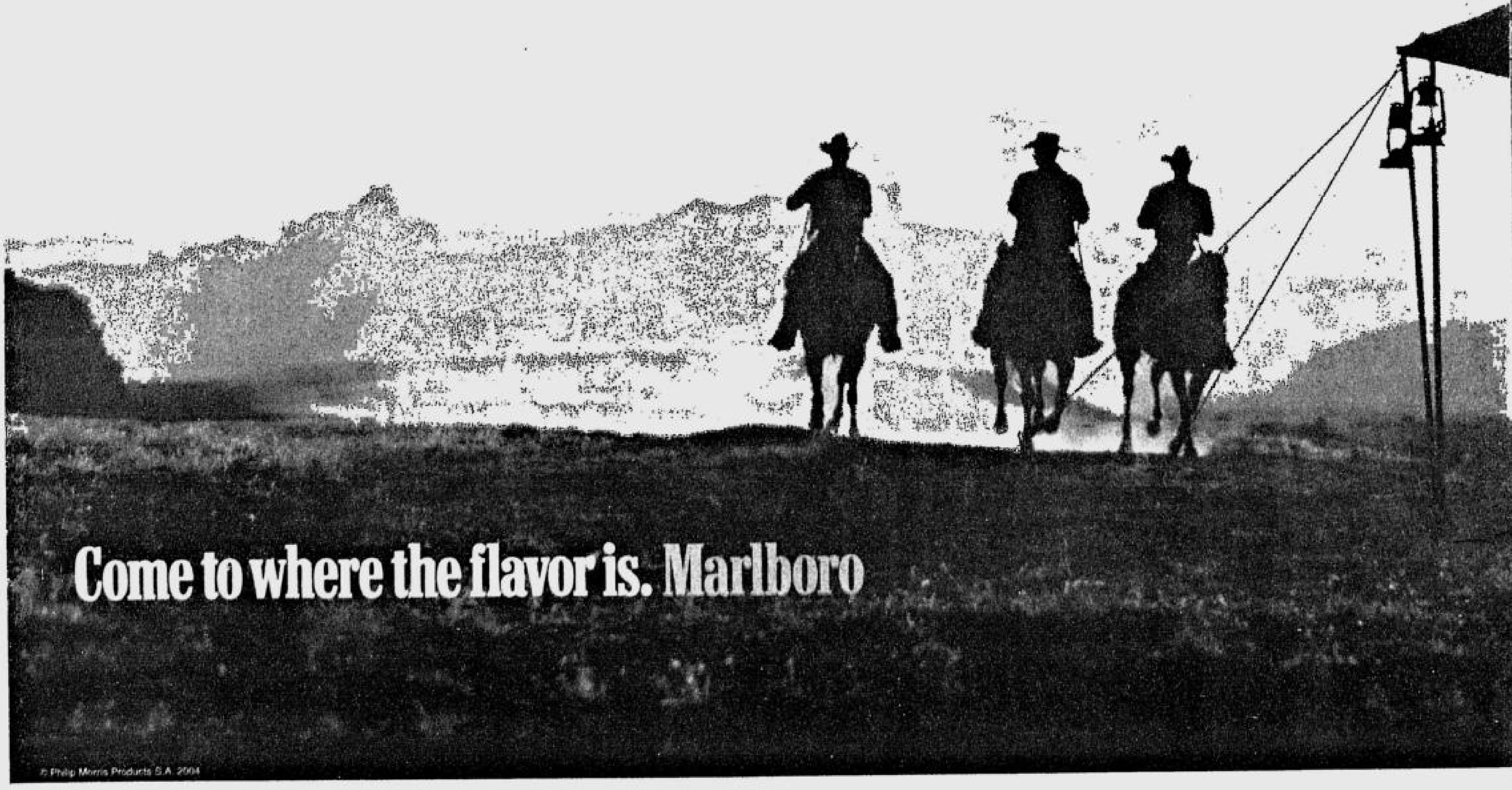
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Chen foes seek int'l probe of shooting

TAIPEI—Taiwan's opposition Monday called for international experts to probe the assassination attempt of President Chen Shui-bian after police admitted they had no suspect, key witnesses or clear motive.

The lack of clear information about the mysterious shooting one day before Saturday's elections which Chen went on to win has fueled conspiracy theories about the incident.

The Kuomintang (KMT) believes Friday's shooting may have been orchestrated to help Chen win a second term.

In a statement released Monday, the KMT said a "credible ad hoc examination team including both domestic and international experts and ballistics, should be set up immediately to address the suspicious gunshot case."

It also demanded "an impartial ad hoc medical examination team including both domestic and international members should be formed immediately to address the issue of a reported wound supposedly resulting from the suspicious gunshot case."

The demands came after a prosecutor in the southern city of Tainan, where the shooting took place, told the United Daily News Monday that there was "no specific suspect and they're trying to find witnesses."

As well as claims the assassination attempt was staged, the KMT has blamed spoiled ballots and vote-buying for its election defeat and launched a legal challenge.

Police have remained tight-lipped about their inquiry, with the only suspect a mysterious man wearing a Chen T-shirt and a crash helmet seen fleeing from the scene in the southern city on a motorcycle. *AFP*

Former terrorism official accuses Bush of using Sept. 11 for political advantage

IN A NEW book, Richard A. Clarke, who was counterterrorism coordinator for President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush, asserts that while neither president did enough to prevent the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration has undermined US national security by using the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks for political advantage and ignoring the threat of al-Qaida in order to invade Iraq.

Clarke, who has spent more than 30 years as a civil servant in Republican and Democratic administrations, issues a highly critical assessment of the Bush White House in "Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror," which is being released on Monday.

Clarke resigned from government in March 2003.

In an interview Sunday evening, Dan Bartlett, the White House communications director, dismissed Clarke's charges as "politically motivated," "reckless" and "baseless."

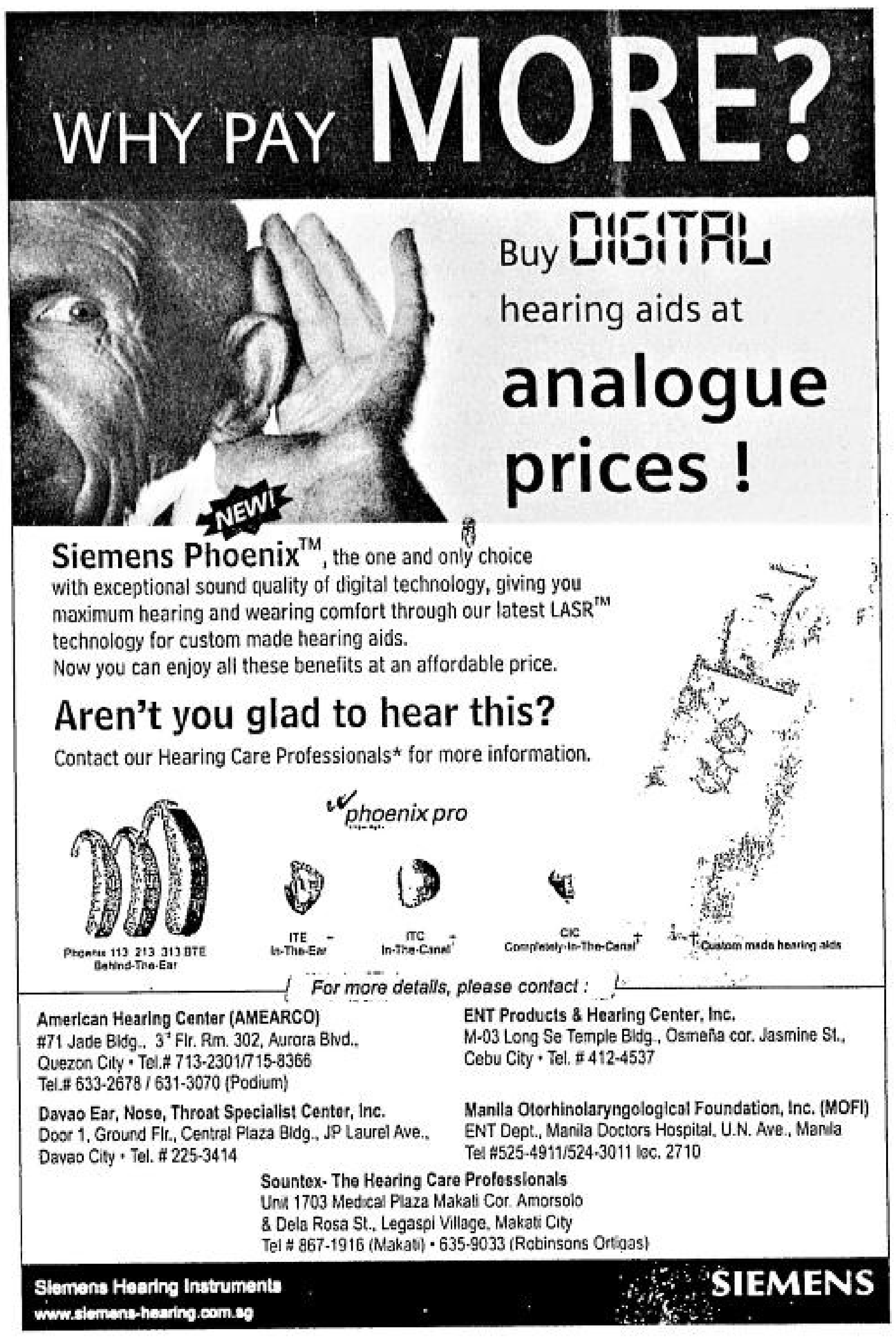
"If Dick Clarke had such grave concerns about the direction of the war on terror, why did he stay on the team as long as he did, and why did he wait till the beginning of a presidential campaign to speak out?" Bartlett said. He said the book's timing showed that it was "more about politics than policy."

In his book, Clarke accuses the administration not only of failing to take al-Qaida seriously before the attacks, despite "repeated warnings," but also of mounting a lackluster, bureaucratic and politicized response to the attacks. Having failed to act against al-Qaida before 9/11, Clarke writes, Bush "harvested a political windfall for taking obvious yet insufficient steps after the attacks."

Clarke also accused the administration of starting "an unnecessary and costly war in Iraq that strengthened the fundamentalist, radical Islamic terrorist movement worldwide."

Clarke alleges in his book that Bush and others in his small inner circle tried to intimidate Clarke and other officials into finding a link between Iraq and al-Qaida despite the intelligence community's repeated determinations that no significant connections existed. He also refers to Vice President Dick Cheney as a "right-wing ideologue," who rejected facts inconsistent with the administration's political outlook and goals.

In an interview broadcast Sunday night on the CBS News program "60 Minutes," Stephen Hadley, the president's deputy national security adviser, denied that anyone at the White House had tried to intimidate Clarke into finding a link between 9/11 and Iraq. *NYT*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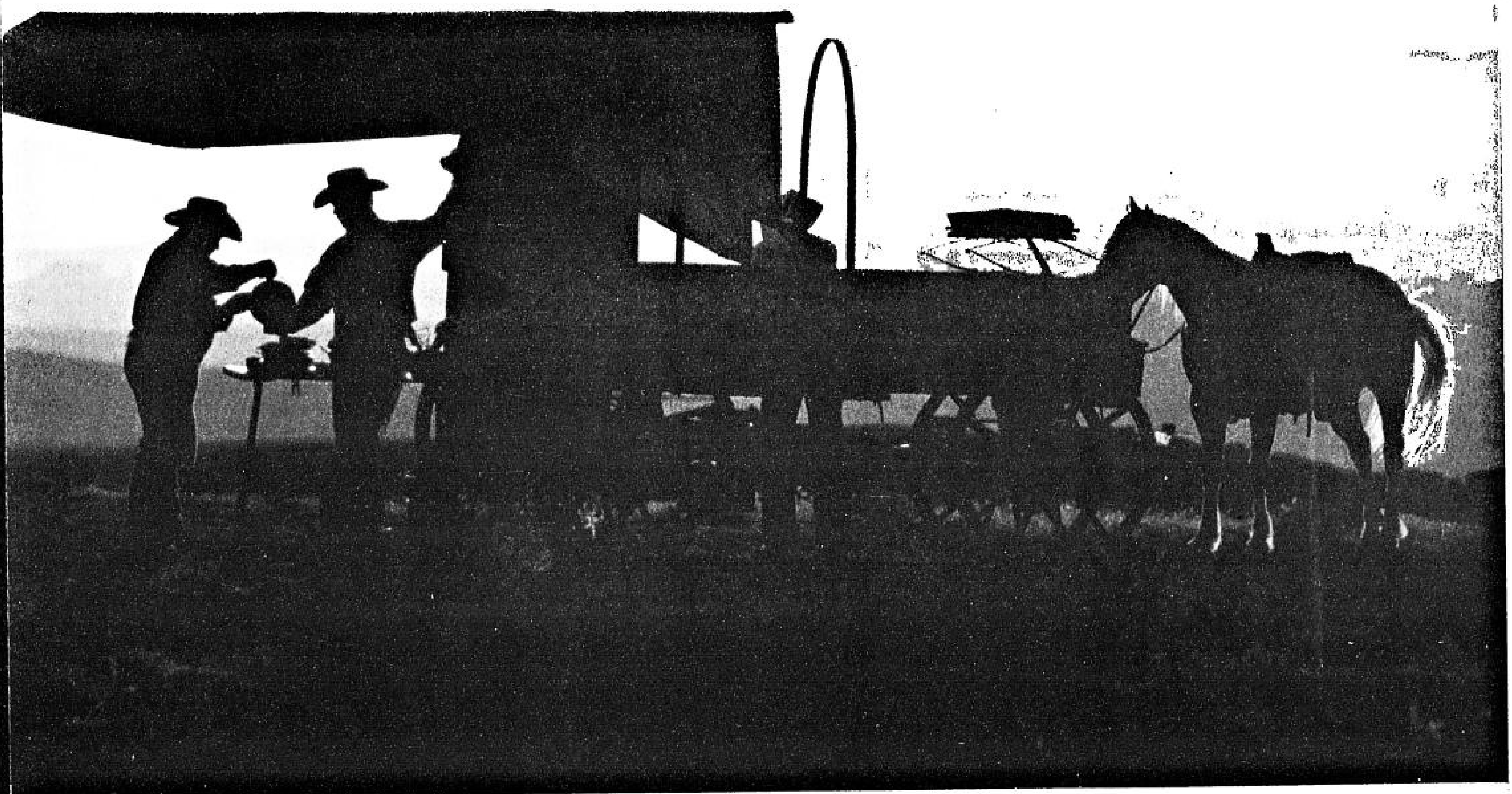

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Endless possibilities

EDITORIAL

THAT the cell phone has endless possibilities was demonstrated once again in stories that appeared in newspapers last week. Text messaging through the cell phone is now being used as a political tool. Actually, this use is not new. Cell phones were used to summon tens of thousands of people to a rally at Edsa in 2001 that ultimately led to the ouster of then President Joseph Estrada.

Now cell phones are being considered as a potential source of revenue by a cash-strapped government. The government is reviving a plan to impose an excise tax on text messages. With a one-centavo tax imposed on each text message sent, the government could earn P550 million a year. With a 10-centavo excise tax, it could raise P5.5 billion. With a 20-centavo tax…

The cell phone can be both a communication tool and a "comfort" toy, according to a study on the attitudes and habits of Filipino children aged 7 to 14 made by a group headed by Cartoon Network. The study showed that owning a mobile phone was one of the priorities of a child of elementary to high school age.

The study also found out that three out of four children who have used a cell phone send out a text message at least once a week, and one out of four send a text message daily. Some candidates could tap this potential by appealing to the voters through their children or siblings. In a close presidential race, the cell phone could be a big deciding factor.

The advantage of the cell phone is that short text messages can be sent to tens of thousands of people at a very low price. The SMS is personal, one-on-one communication. Of 84 million Filipinos, about 22 million are estimated to own cell phones. Just assuming that one-fourth of the 22 million are voters, that's more than 5 million people that can be potentially influenced through text messages come voting time.

Text messaging can be used for positive projection, such as to spread the word about the supposed strengths and virtues of a candidate. But it can also be used for negative purposes, such as to spread black propaganda, rumors and false news about the supposed withdrawal or the death of a candidate. Such negative messages could have an effect in a closely fought election. We can only hope that all the candidates and their staff will use cell phones responsibly during the election period.

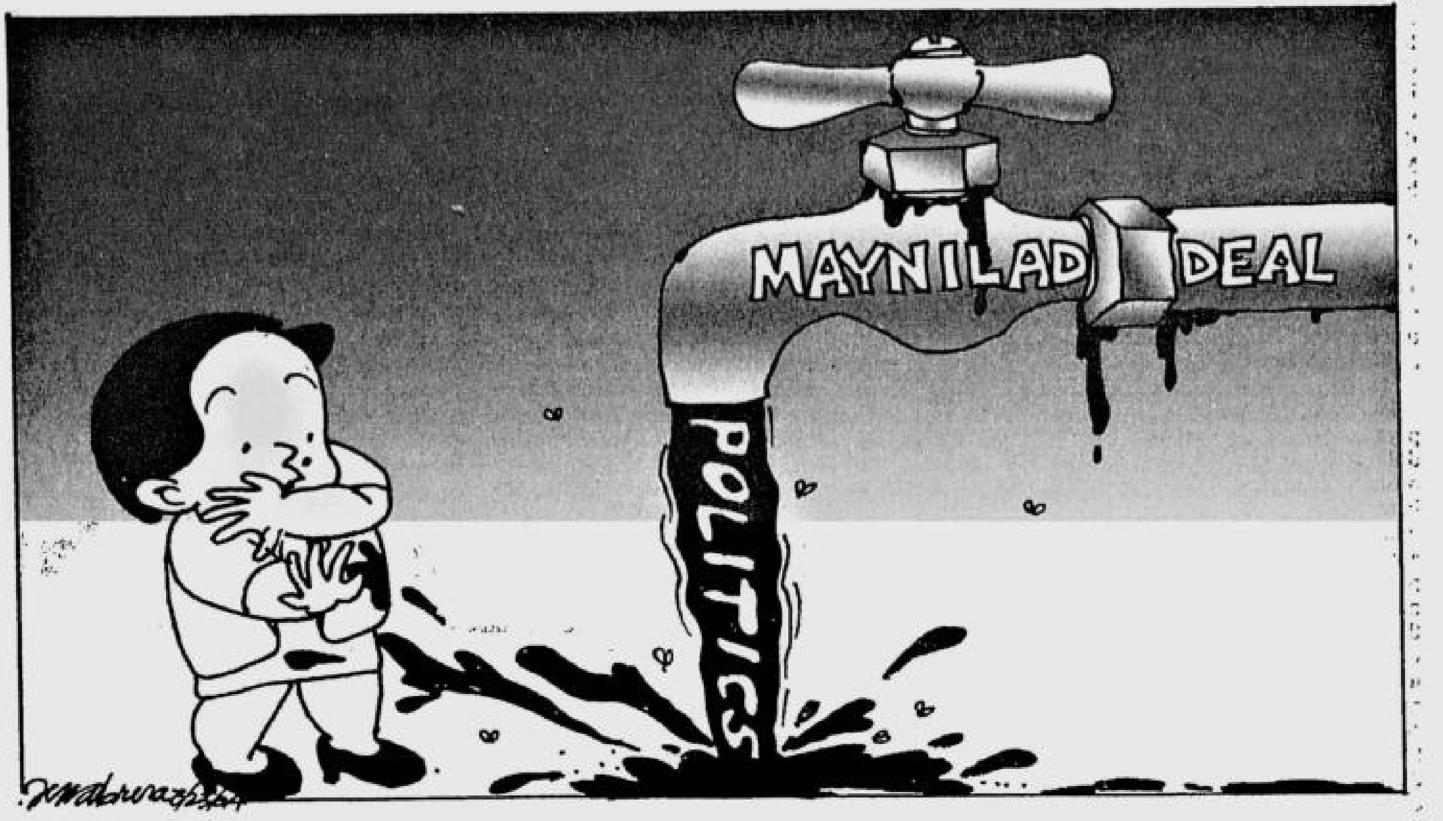
Cell phones used to be luxury items that only the rich could afford. Now they are necessities. Cell phones used to serve only utilitarian purposes. Now they are used for fun and entertainment. They are also fashion statements, symbols of power, wealth and importance. They have woven themselves into the nation's social fabric.

Cell phones have changed society, the economy and politics. They are changing the ways people react to other people. They have given rise to rules of etiquette that are often more honored in the breach than the observance. They are not supposed to be used in theaters, meetings and conferences, business or academic presentations, churches, weddings and funerals, but don't we often hear phones ringing at these venues and events?

Cell phones can also be dangerous to one's health. Driving while talking on the cell phone has been likened to drunken driving. Using hands-free headsets could partially solve the problem, but it does not do away with the mental distraction or emotional stimulus that using a cell phone can create. The use of cell-phones by people driving vehicles is supposed to be banned, but if anyone has been arrested for it, we haven't heard about it.

Cell phones have extended the working hours of businessmen and professionals, unless they shut them off after office hours. Most business people end up doing more work as a result of cell phones because they can receive calls at any time, even on their days off or even while on vacation. Cell phones enable them to do more work during idle time. For instance, they can send and receive calls while on the road.

Cell phones are a potent tool of communication in a democracy. Edsa II has demonstrated that, and the current election campaign is also demonstrating that. They can help keep democratic countries vibrant and alive. Conversely, cell phones are a challenge to authoritarian governments that depend for their survival on suppression of information to keep the population under control. Cell phones may be a source of disturbance and annoyance, they may be a distraction, they may sometimes be a health hazard, but we are sure that those who love democracy will shout, "Hurray for the cell phone!"



'State visit' shivers

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

IMAGINE "President" Fernando Poe on a state visit to China. You'd have, as a Cole Porter song puts it, "chills run up and down (your) spine." Here's how a fictional visit could go:

President Hu Jintao (HJ) welcomes Poe (FPJ) to the Great Hall of the People. They begin a one-on-one, thus:

FPJ: Thank you. *Sie-sie.* Wow. This is bigger than Malacañang. But why so few people? Back home, a million seem to jam the Palace daily for "breakfast, lunch and dinner."

HJ: And what hotel do they lodge in? Population here is over 1.28 billion. For every Filipino, there are 16 Chinese. Yet, in a decade, 150 million rose above the poverty line.

We scrapped state quotas, invested in farm-to-market roads, agricultural research, etc. Food was produced. "Even a clever daughter-in-law needs rice to cook with."

Although our growth is below one percent, indigents still rose by 23 million because of our huge base.

FPJ: But investors packed up when I campaigned. Your Filipino comrades, in The Hague and the New People's Army, insist: Investors go home.

HJ (Laughing): See! The last Maoists in the world are Filipinos. As for your nervous investors, send them over.

Between 1990-2003, direct foreign investments (FDI) here reached over $450 billion. We outstripped Japan's $17 billion and Korea's $12 billion. China is the world's fifth largest FDI host, after the United States ($1.3 trillion).

More investments mean you produce and sell more. "You cannot get two skins from one cow."

Capital and new technology boosted our exports eightfold. Between 1990 and 2003, we sold over $380 billion abroad, dislodging Mexico as the United States' second largest trading partner. *Hasta la vista amigo.*

FPJ: My 19—or is it 35?—advisers assure me sincerity's enough to start with. Should I leave less important things, like how to pay our $59.4 billion debt, to Dolphy? But Edong and Johnny Ponce insist they do it.

HJ: "Even the Emperor has straw-sandaled relatives." We're short of film stars. But we graduate 325,000 engineers yearly, three times as many as India. More students train in Europe, the United States, Japan.

US contracts here total $70 billion; its yearly corporate revenue was $7.2 billion, double Singapore's. We run trade surpluses with North America and Europe. "It's glorious to be rich," Deng Xiao Peng taught.

FPJ: Our *ukay-ukay* trade is also booming. Is China now a "have" country?

HJ: We're far from what Deng Xiaopeng called *xiaokang*—"a society that provides well for all citizens." Have you read Harvard's John Kenneth Gailbraith's "The Affluent Society"? No? It outlines similar goals.

But our city joblessness rate is 8 percent. Over 200 million are idle in rural areas. To absorb them—plus 8 million fired from bankrupt state firms—we must create 20 million new jobs a year.

Our population is greying. By 2030, one out of four citizens will be over 65—just like in the US today. Unlike the United States, we don't have pensions. We must scramble for funds. "You can't ease hunger by painting rice cakes."

FPJ: We too must cut government payrolls drastically, curb corruption and reduce IOUs. Otherwise, Central Bank's Paeng says we'll yodel "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" in three years. But Manong Ernie and Jinggoy insist: "Happy days are here again." How do you describe China today?

HJ: Some say we've emerged as a "soft power." But we did tough things, like writing 13 amendments to our Constitution. It now states, "Private property obtained legally is inviolable." Deng said: "The cat's color does not matter as long as it catches mice."

We shattered the old "iron rice bowl" of salaries for life. "Unless a man works, he shall not eat," your Saint Paul wrote. Look at the results.

Imports from Asia to be reprocessed here and sold abroad grew from $70 billion in 1995 to $160 billion today. China and a bloc of East Asian countries hold $1.7 trillion in foreign reserves. We bought $100 billion of US government securities.

FPJ: I didn't read our Constitution until I was 64. I was busy making movies. Anyway, heart is more important than constitutions or brains. Is that your experience too?

HJ: "He who can handle a writing brush will never need to beg." All Politburo and 200 Central Committee members are university graduates. Almost none had higher education 35 years ago.

We're the fourth generation of leaders since the "Long March." Our successors need to be educated even better, given a changing world.

Some 200 million cell phones are in use and two million sold monthly. Our energy demands will soar from 1.7 million barrels in 2001 to 9.8 million in 20 years.

We signed up with the World Trade Organization, normalized diplomatic relations with 18 more countries, organized talks on North Korea's nuclear issues and we will host the 2008 Olympics.

Before, Mao "made decisions like the 'Godfather's' Corleones, with Zhou En Lai as consigliere, observers say. Today's leadership, Henry Kissinger notes, resembles more Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party. But what's your reaction to China's initiatives in "Asean + 1" and "Asean + 3"?

FPJ: *Saka na.* That's in section 3 of my briefing book. I've not reached that part. We'll talk about it when you visit Manila. Susan will arrange a lauriat. *Sie-sie.*

This scenario is fiction. Being less strange than truth, fiction can still make one break, as Cole Porter sang, into cold sweat.

* * *

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

More than ever, scary

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOMEONE wrote a letter some time ago in response to my column on Feb. 23 entitled "Scary." In that column, I expressed the fear that GMA was going the route of Ferdinand Marcos, and indeed was showing signs of harboring the same relentless craving for power. I said that the current elections reminded me of 1969, when Marcos sought reelection and spared no expense to do so, thereby plunging the peso to near-double its original rate to the dollar after the elections. The second term merely whetted his appetites, however, and he sought to prolong his stay in office—forever—with martial law. If we don't watch out, I said, we might see the same thing with GMA.

The reader (obviously a GMA supporter) said surely I knew deep in my heart that wasn't true. GMA is nowhere near like Marcos.

I was tempted to respond to that then and say, no, on the contrary, I know deep in my heart that to be true. It is a fear I feel to the marrow of my bones.

Well, if I had any doubts then, I do not have them now. GMA's decision to bail out Benpres is but the latest of a series of moves that suggest a scale of ambition and lack of restraint that recall Marcos'. That decision is Marcosian. Only Marcos practiced that kind of cronyism and in such a breathtaking way. It's a blatant use of power and an utterly inexcusable one: You will be hard put to find any businessman, local or foreign, who will see the logic in turning P8 billion in debt of a near-bankrupt company into equity in a government-owned firm after it takes over it. At least the logic that has to do with the people's welfare. There is a logic to it, which is the logic of crony politics, or economics. No, the ambition and lack of restraint are of the same order as Marcos'.

And GMA has not won yet.

But the Lopezes may be forewarned as well, if history is anything to go by. Marcos also wooed them with furious doggedness when he ran for president in 1965, Imelda even kneeling before Fernando Lopez to get him to agree to be her husband's running mate—or so the story goes. All of them got what they wanted—until Marcos, drunk with power from seeing his cup overflow with it, turned on the Lopezes themselves and robbed them along with the rest of their countrymen. Then the Lopezes had one of their own—Eugenio's brother Fernando—for insurance. Today they have only Noli de Castro. Those who do not heed history are doomed to repeat it.

My apologies to some of my friends who are so scared of FPJ they want anyone but him. Between FPJ and GMA, I'm far more scared of GMA. This is a case truly where dumbness becomes infinitely preferable to shrewdness, ignorance to unscrupulousness. At least if the choice were limited only to the two—and it is not. GMA advertises herself as the one with "experience," for which reason she is asking the voters to vote for her over all the others. But the question is: Experience in what?

So far she has shown only experience in pursuing power at all costs. Emphasis on "all." She it is who plunged the country into war after 9/11, escalating the war in Mindanao because it stoked two deep-seated Filipino biases, which are the Filipino's pro-American and anti-Moro attitudes. Proof of the cynicism with which she took that tack is her lack of reference to that war in this current campaign, particularly in light of the Iraq War having turned into an American nightmare and the former Spanish president who took the same tack being unceremoniously booted out of office by irate Spanish voters.

She it is who said she would not run after falling out of grace with the public but did, demolishing all ethical barriers in electoral politics. Henceforth, anything is permissible. She it is who is pillaging the treasury to promote herself, and lying about the uses of the money. Do you need to have any experience in economics or indeed be a PhD in it to know the impact of that kind of spending on the peso? That is quite apart from the fact that it is corruption of epic proportions. And she it is who has now thrown Benpres an P8 billion bone. Again do you need to have an experience with economics or be a PhD in it to know how many schoolhouses, artesian wells and roads and bridges P8 billion will buy?

As experience—in making things right rather than wrong—goes, the one who can rightfully claim to have it is Raul Roco. He it is who transformed the Department of Education from the snake pit Erap plunged it to (what irony that the department tasked with enlightenment would have a reputation only for corruption) to the country's No. 1 government office, by the World Bank's reckoning. That is no mean feat. You take the education department as a microcosm of the country, a cesspool that the last two presidents in particular have made it into, then maybe the country has a better chance with him. I know people have complained about his temper, his disposition, his lack of charm, but that may be exactly what we need, someone who is little bothered by the way he comes across. Neither *pakikisama* nor opportunism does the job.

No, the choice is not limited to someone without experience and another who has experience only in making things worse.

But meanwhile, the meter is running, along with GMA. One is almost tempted to say she really ought to win if only to inherit the world she is bequeathing to us after the elections. If only to reap the whirlwind whose seeds she is planting today. Hers is a dogged pursuit of power the likes of which we have not seen since Marcos. She has already pawned the present. She'll soon pawn the future—if she hasn't already.

The people who lit candles during Marcos' time were right. All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to sit by and do nothing.

Emotional issue

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PUERTO PRINCESA—As a city mouse I welcome the chance to travel to the remote corners of this archipelago, which is also a good excuse to get away from my preoccupation with politics. Over the weekend, I joined my husband and several PNOC executives, among them senior vice president Rolando "Fuji" Rodriguez and Rene Bala, manager of the Energy Research Department, on a trip to Palawan where the PNOC donated two solar home system to two sitios. But the hot story I got here was the Palaweños' disgruntlement over President Macapagal-Arroyo's position that Malampaya, the huge source of natural gas off Palawan's eastern shores, cannot be considered as belonging to the province because it is not within its territorial limits, and therefore Malampaya belongs to the nation. This definition means that Palawan would not be entitled to 40 percent of the 60 percent in royalties that the government is collecting from the gas field, as provided by the Local Government Code.

* * *

Palaweños maintain that historically Malampaya belongs to their province. Ever since the drillings in that area by a consortium composed of Shell, Texaco and PNOC-Exploration Corp. (the latter holds a 10-percent interest in the consortium), the people here have dreamt of their share and how it could trigger the development of their province. Palaweños hoped to get P1 billion annually for the next 20 years under the LGC, but the Macapagal administration has committed to give only P600 million. Out of that amount, P300 million has already been given, with the two districts getting P100 million each. (Rep. Abraham "Baham" Mitra complains, however, that P30 million was given to Puerto Princesa from the 2nd district's share, in addition to the P5 million the city got.) The second P300 million is expected to be released after the elections.

* * *

The reduction of what Palawan considers its rightful share of the Malampaya royalties has become an emotional issue for Palaweños. In fact, a group that includes church leaders has filed for a bigger claim before the local court against the national government. To appease them, GMA was quoted as saying that she was giving the province the P600 million despite their suit, but Palaweños are still not happy. Since this is an election year, the sentiment could mean a reduction of votes for her, even if she has the support of all the province's major politicians. Mitra and reelectionist Gov. Joel Reyes admitted they have to work harder to reverse the anticipated negative trend among the province's 450,000 voters.

* * *

On this trip, we were accompanied to one site by Mitra and businesswoman and radio-TV executive Lourdes Ilustre, a former defense assistant secretary and later chief of staff of Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo before she rejoined the private sector. After traveling south for two hours over rough roads from Puerto Princesa to Nara, we climbed the mountains to an isolated barangay called Dumangueña. Lulu Ilustre explained that the name is derived from the fact that many of the inhabitants originally hailed from Dumangas, Iloilo. In the sitio where the solar home system will be installed, about 75 families mostly from the indigenous Tagbanua tribe survive on rice farming and forest products. The barangay has no electricity, one of a little over 4,000 unelectrified barangays in the country.

* * *

The barangay folks milled around the small roofed area in the middle of their sitio, which serves as a mini-town hall, quite excited over the prospect of having electricity at last. With their representative, Baham Mitra, they watched technicians from Shell Solar Philippines install the solar panel over the mini-town hall and wire three lights to the solar battery that stores the sun's captured energy. They kept coaxing the technicians to hurry up so they could already listen to the battery-run karaoke, powered this time by solar energy. After a while, the speakers were blaring out "Ocho-Ocho" and the villagers broke out into loud clapping and then posed for pictures with Mitra and the PNOC visitors. They said there would be celebration that evening, and in the barrio context that meant dancing, drinking and karaoke singing.

* * *

The solar home system is made commercially available to everyone by Shell Solar Philippines at P35,000 per unit on installment basis. But the PNOC is able to make it available at the lower cost of P19,000 on an easy monthly installment of P300, thanks to a partial subsidy from the Dutch government. The PNOC units, however, are available only to communities that are not reached by existing grids, such as remote islands or those in the mountains. From time to time a donation is made. Lulu Ilustre said that a solar system that can power a radio and three bulbs or one black and white TV and two lights would alter the life of Dumangueña forever. The kids attending the barangay's elementary school can now study at the barangay hall at night, while the women folk do some handicrafts.

* * *

PNOC's solar energy project won a major category of the global awards for energy in November last year in Austria. It's easy to appreciate its importance. A year ago, I watched how a a small dark island off Nara and belonging to the Rodriguez family shone like a bright jewel in the seas after being wired with solar energy. Now it serves as a refuge for fishermen in stormy weather. Yesterday, accompanied by Ramin Nadimi, Shell Solar GM, we traveled to a barangay called "New Cuyo" in the town of Roxas north of Puerto Princesa, where my husband had promised to donate a solar system to a school a year ago. Since that promise was made, the town has been hooked up to the grid, but the supply is still unstable; hence the solar unit comes handy. What's great about solar energy is that it's free in this country where the sun's out for nine months of the year.

An education in feminism

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

(More excerpts from a talk I delivered before the graduating class of Miriam College last March 20.)

I REALLY don't know what led my parents to place their daughters in Maryknoll, given that it was then still a relatively new institution. My own guess is that they were attracted to its "American" nature, Maryknoll being an American religious congregation. At the time "America" spelled everything that was progressive, liberal and forward-thinking. Maybe all they wanted was for us girls to lose our tight Pangasinan-Ilocano accents and start talking like "Americanas." So eager were they to establish their social cachet through their children that they established an "English only" rule in the house. It was only when I was in high school that I felt grown-up enough to talk to my parents in Tagalog. Before then, to talk to them in such a "familiar" language and manner seemed disrespectful.

Despite our colonial education, the sisters and teachers at Maryknoll managed to turn us into women who would be a credit to Filipino society and of service to the nation. Many of the women who have passed through these premises have chosen to serve the country best by being the best wives and mothers they could be; others have chosen other paths—in business, in the professions, in government service, in civic and NGO involvement. For the High School Class of 1972, my batch that was beset by the currents of social, cultural, political, religious and even ideological changes then sweeping the world, the paths that lay open to us were so much more diverse and plentiful than we had thought possible. Who would have thought, for instance, that Maryknollers would join the diaspora of the young and university-educated fleeing the comforts of the campus and of an urban lifestyle for the uncertainties of life as revolutionaries in the countryside, in the years after martial law was declared? I was not one of them, by the way.

But I am not surprised that we would be swept up in the turmoil, or that we would somehow survive it and find other ways, other routes to living up to our potential in later years. Our classroom learning equipped us not just with the basics of a liberal education, but also with an "attitude." This was an attitude of confrontation, of not shirking any challenge or accepting any limitation, of feeling free to articulate our thoughts and even question our teachers.

* * *

THOUGH I have had my "issues" with gender exclusivity in educational institutions, I do recognize one important gift this bestows on students, especially young female students. Studying in an all-girls school allows a girl the freedom to compete and excel without the social pressures of boy-girl interaction. Young women in mixed classroom environments, so research has found, often feel the need to "live down" to their real abilities and gifts so as not to intimidate their male classmates and therefore reduce their chances of social, if not romantic, success. But when all of one's classmates are girls, then this pressure is eased a bit, although I am sure that to this day high school and even college students still feel the false dichotomy between "popularity" and "achievement," and thus think that they should "hide their light under a bushel" lest it damage their chances at achieving conformity and therefore social acceptance.

But in Maryknoll those of us who refused to conform, who would not fit into the pre-cast mold of conventional femininity, managed to find a place and, more than that, acceptance and even respect. In this the Maryknoll nuns proved to be powerful role models, showing us by the examples of their lives and the choices they made that one need not fear change or challenges. I remember experiencing the shock of my life when, taking part in a clandestine "social awareness" seminar, one of the speakers turned out to be one of the few American Maryknoll sisters still on campus, dressed in the then-new and unfamiliar "civilian" dress they had adopted.

* * *

WHEN I am asked how I "became" a feminist, I'm always tempted to say that I've been a feminist all my life. My parents didn't bring us up to believe in the innate superiority of men, certainly not of my brothers, and I had always assumed that I would achieve all my goals if I was willing to work hard and apply myself. But this nascent feminism would have remained just a vague unease, an unfathomable sadness and restlessness, had it not been for the women's organization Pilipina and the gender sensitization training that focused and recast my "feelings" into a deeper analysis of social realities and gender structures. I had no easy explanations for why I was feeling this way. I had married and still am married to a man who would live his own feminism in his own simple way, simply by letting me be myself and not being afraid to challenge social concepts of what a "real" man is.

But my formal education in feminism began with the recognition that I need not look to other people to "blame" for the unbidden feelings of inadequacy, insecurity and guilt that overwhelmed me when I gave thought to my multiple roles of daughter, sister, wife, mother, journalist, citizen and activist. I had only myself to blame. I needed only to recognize how my upbringing, my social environment, and my own foolish expectations and illusions combined to produce the dissonance I felt. And I also needed to see that I was not alone, that other women shared my situation, and most important of all, that there was a way out of our shared dilemmas and that change was possible and indeed, desirable. *(More tomorrow)*

The heroic defense of Cainta

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

AFTER THE DEATH of Rajah Matanda, Adelantado Miguel de Legaspi received word that two ships, S. Juan and Espiritu Santo, arrived in Panay from Mexico with D. Diego de Legaspi, his nephew, in one of them. D. Diego arrived in Manila July 17 in the company of Capt. Juan Chacon, who commanded one of the ships.

The two ships were in such poor condition when they arrived in Panay that one of them was not allowed to return to Mexico. The adelantado ordered that it be docked on the river of Manila. The Maestre de Campo was sent to Panay to oversee its transfer to Manila, with Juan de la Torre as pilot.

To help spread the faith, six Augustinian religious arrived in those ships. One of them was Fr. Alonso de Alvarado who had been in the armada of Villalobos. Another was Fr. Agustin de Albuquerque who became the first parish priest of Taal. Some of the missionaries were sent to Cebu to accompany Fr. Martin de Rada, the prior. Four stayed in Manila to work in the environs and in Pampanga.

In the meantime, the *adelantado* was determined to subjugate the people of Cainta and Taytay. He sent his nephew Juan de Salcedo with a galley (a small ship propelled by oars and sails) and 16 caracoas accompanied by a hundred Spanish soldiers and many Visayans allied with them. Salcedo sailed on Aug. 15, 1571, arriving in Cainta on the 20th. He sought peace from the villagers but Gat-Maitan responded arrogantly that they didn't want or desire peace, but chose war because they weren't cowards like the people in Manila. Confident in the defenses offered by their fort and the security of the site, they were joined by people from Taytay.

These two towns are in a plain on the shores of a river that flows from La Laguna and before arriving there divides in two large arms, both with abundant water. On its banks are found the two towns a half league from each other, with the river passing through both before finally becoming one in a part of the terrain encircled by thick bamboo groves. These bamboos were tied together with liana, turning them into a thick wall where the people had constructed two ramparts with their moats full of water. By the river, they had built strong bulwarks with wooden towers and good artillery, guarded by a large number of warriors armed with arrows, swords and other projectile-type arms.

Deciding to attack, Salcedo first sent 2nd Lt. Antonio de Carvajal with some escorts to reconnoiter the town and determine the weakest point where they could enter. Carvajal, wounded by an arrow in his arm, returned with the information that the weakest spot, the least fortified and with the easiest access was the other part of an arroyo on the side of La Laguna where many boats could be seen entering the river.

Salcedo ordered installed in the prow of the galley a stone-throwing mortar. He and his men then spent the night on shore, while 20 soldiers and numerous allies from Manila remained with Carvajal on the galley with orders that when they heard firing, they should proceed with the attack on the bulwarks and the houses in the town, while Salcedo and his men tried to enter through the wall by the arroyo. When they heard the sound of the bugle, the signal that they had taken the town, they were to stop firing.

After giving these instructions, Salcedo began his march and turned toward the river where the attack was to take place. He arrived in the arroyo and found it defended by a fistful of valiant Cainteños who started to fire arrows and hurl lances.

Taken by surprise, the soldiers without waiting for Salcedo's order attacked the rampart and were overwhelmed by a rain of arrows. Finding such tenacious resistance, they began to retreat and flee in disarray.

Salcedo berated his men harshly for having attacked without his orders. Observing that in the other part of the arroyo the rampart was lower, he ordered a skiff brought there and after beaching it, he ordered some of his soldiers to use it as passage to the other side and take a more elevated point from where they could fire at the defenders of the town.

With the defenders retreating, Salcedo and his men were able to approach the wall and breach it. The intrepid Gat-Maitan with his Cainteños came to close the breach, forcing Saavedra to back off.

In the meantime, the cannons of the galley destroyed the bulwarks and the houses in the town in a manner the people had not seen before. And the shouts of the 600 Visayans allied with the Spanish made the natives believe that the Spaniards were already inside the poblacion. Because of this, the valiant defenders of the breach abandoned it and retreated to the center of the town.

Salcedo observed this from a distance and ordered the breach attacked again. This time, the Spaniards encountered little resistance. Led by Salcedo and with Saavedra carrying the Spanish banner, they succeeded in entering the town. Together with their soldiers, they advanced rapidly and shortly scaled the wall where a bloody battle was fought.

The Cainteños, encouraged by their chief Gat-Maitan, preferred to die rather than surrender. Having taken over the walls, the Spaniards climbed the towers and hoisted the Spanish banner. At the blare of the bugle, the cannons stopped firing from the galley.

Cainta had fallen.

(Pedro Paterno, "Historia de Filipinas," Vol. II.)

Salute to OFWs

I ARRIVED in Singapore smugly thinking that I came here to train. And indeed, I have been getting some good, all-around training so far.

But it was hell during my first few weeks. The place I am attached to is trying to prove to be a First-World facility, and everything they do, they try to do the First-World way.

How lonely it was, especially at the beginning. Everything was precise and formal. No one smiled (and still nobody does). A friend told me if you kept smiling at everyone, they would either consider you weird or think you are trying to pick them up, depending on the context. Surprisingly, there were no Filipinos around. I was so lonely.

YOUNG BLOOD

Red Mendoza

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I knew I did not come here to work or earn some money. I even brought some of my savings with me so that at least I could have a taste of "*la dolce vita.*" But it was still lonely, with my family far away. I had opted to live with a Chinese family, hoping to at least feel the comfort of family—and yet I have remained an outsider looking in.

Then I realized that with all my self-absorbed, self-pity, I ought to notice how Filipino domestic helpers were faring. They were getting less than one-fifth of my allowance. Although they had gone to college and had some facility with the English language, they were usually stuck with Chinese families who spoke very little English and whose food was not to our taste. Imagine their first day, their first week, their first year.

Just thinking of their flight, I was filled not with pity but with respect for our countrymen. All the while, I had thought that the label given them "Bayani ng Bayan" was a terrible cliche. But soon I realized how difficult it was for them to earn every precious dollar they sent home, in the process saving their country from economic collapse.

That is definitely nothing short of heroic. So I have learned to look upon our people here with such a very high regard that at times I feel humbled.

I see that even here, Filipino professionals scoff at the loud DHs (dometic helpers) congregating at their favorite Lucky Plaza, or having a picnic at the Gulong-gulong Park (which is not the official name, of course, of that patch of green just outside the Orchard MRT station) on Sundays.

Baduy it may be, but give them that, I tell my friends. They are not like you and me. They get to go out only on Sundays—and that is if they are lucky. I am not saying that they are ill-treated at all, because most of them are not. It is just the nature of their work that they cannot move around as much as professionals who work from 8 to 5.

You hear them giggling, and then later whining that they have to go back to work at the end of the day. Some of them have acquired the "Singlish" accent, especially when they address their wards. "No *lah*! What to do *lah*? Can or cannot? Cannot come next week? Why *lah*?" I would smile at how they have adapted—very well indeed, since most of them haven't seen a pair of chopsticks, much less used them!

It is not by design that this society is cruel in its accommodation of foreign workers (I include myself in this category, though I know legally I am not). But its cold and sharp efficiency is just too much of a culture shock for most of us. And to think that I have traveled to this place twice before.

It is different now looking from within, entirely different. Before, I used to marvel at how everything was expected to work and they did work, and worked on time! Now it feels like you are living in a world created by George Orwell where spontaneity is dead and Big Brother watches, and it is suffocating. But do you revel in the safe orderliness or despair at the lack of random encounters with nature and chance? I wonder if this concerns many Filipinos living here at all. How does this affect our psyche when we go home?

My training course is drawing to a close. And while many Filipino workers I have come to know dream of moving on to another country, like the United Kingdom or the United States, I dream of coming home. I need to go back. I need my country more than it needs me. And that is the reason I am so afraid to venture as far as the United States, because then I will not have the luxury of coming home as often as I like (which is a few times a year).

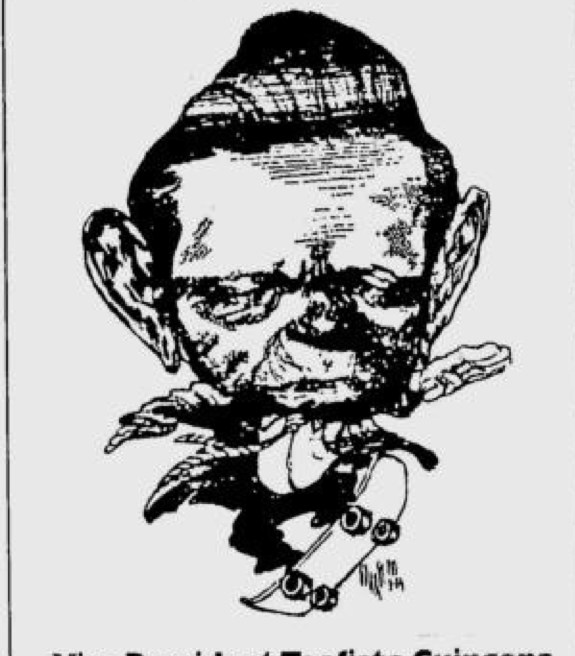
And yet you have to understand them, our *kababayan*, when they refuse to go home, knowing full well that they have no future. How else will they earn the same amount of money in the Philippines? Market forces dictate that they stay abroad. I selfishly hope that they will continue to remit foreign exchange to keep our economy afloat. And I desperately hope that we will find solutions to our economic problems and create job opportunities for our workers so that they won't have to leave for money.

In truth, I do not qualify as an OFW. Our embassy actually refuses to give me an OFW card (despite repeated requests). But when I walk around the city, I try to imagine that I am in their shoes and, like a kid pretending to be my idols, I imagine that I am an OFW, the closest thing to a hero for our country.

Imagine, we have a few millions of them. *Saludo ako sa inyo!*

Red Mendoza, 29, is a graduate of the UP College of Medicine and is now a clinical fellow at the National University Hospital in Singapore.

IN THE NEWS



Vice President Teofisto Guingona

Not FPJ but certainly not GMA

COMMENTARIES exhorting an already convinced middle class to reject FPJ abound. But something is missing in the analysis. Take Joel Rocamora's paper, (PDI, 2/22/04) in a recycled version ("Can FPJ translate reel into real?"). Its gist is that we must ensure FPJ's defeat and pounce on his every weakness.

But Rocamora's article is of note more for what he leaves unsaid. Having known Rocamora for his political savvy, we hope that the article's implied endorsement of GMA is not lost on him. We clear up ethical grounds by stating that none of us support either candidacy.

If Rocamora is alarmed that FPJ's victory would result in destabilization, we are likewise appalled by the damage that GMA is inflicting on our institutions. The former is a possibility, but the latter is already happening. For example, GMA's partisan appointments to the Comelec and her deployment of the Carpio-Villaraza group in sensitive public offices, the reenactment of the 2003 budget to augment the discretionary funds for electioneering, the mobilization of public officials (Manapat and Corpus) for political demolition and the use of the whole state apparatus for her campaign

While Rocamora points out that the FPJ party is made up of Marcos-Erap forces, we also say that GMA has accommodated Marcos-Erap-Danding interests. And may we add how she has embraced Jose Pidal, as well as Nani Perez.

While Rocamora fears the destabilization arising from an FPJ victory, we should equally fear GMA's squid tactics that cause destabilization.

He wrote: "FPJ has to be 'defeated' before the May elections." So he states: "The non-issue of .FPJ's out-of-wedlock son, and reportedly two other daughters might be more damaging than his not knowing how the peso loses its value." These issues are not to be taken lightly. But so far, none of the commentaries on this have gone beyond the usual moralistic condemnation.

As for the truly important issues of sexuality and reproductive rights, GMA's health policies are just as bent on impregnating as many women as possible as FPJ's libido. Perhaps FPJ in this sense may be a little better. He may yet agree that women may choose artificial contraception as long as they are not his lovers. Professed sinner that he is, we doubt that he would come to the presidency proclaiming that he is a "good son of the Church" ala GMA.

Rocamora urges us to "work together to prevent the looming disaster of an FPJ presidency." He is trying to scare his readers into voting for someone else, yet he does not tell us who that should be. He must tell his readers who should be left standing in the wreckage of FPJ's candidacy.

—CARLITO ANONUEVO, MANUEL BUENCAMINO, SYLVIA ESTRADA-CLAUDIO, FIDES LIM, NEPOMUCENO MALALUAN AND FILOMENO STA. ANA III,
3F, 40 Matulungin St.,
Central, Quezon City

Roco, Brother Eddie should unite

RAUL Roco and Bro. Eddie Villanueva should unite to fight traditional politics. Among the current set of presidential candidates, it is only former Sen. Raul Roco and Bro. Eddie Villanueva who are generally perceived as representing a new kind of politics based on principles and morality, rightfully standing up to the ruinous reign of traditional politics which has dominated and wreaked havoc on the nation's political landscape for decades.

All the other candidates are either steeped in *trapo*/patronage politics (like President Macapagal-Arroyo) or are too closely connected to personalities who thrive on these pernicious practices (like FPJ vis-à-vis the persons surrounding him), such that they would never be able to provide the refreshing change of political leadership that we so desperately need to progress as a nation and to catch up with our rapidly advancing Asian neighbors.

There is clearly a need to rid ourselves of the scourge of traditional politics and "showbiztocracy" (to borrow Mr. Esposo's term) in order for us to move forward. If Senator Roco and Brother Eddie could join forces and form a single formidable alliance that will carry the torch of integrity, morality, competence and vision, then the Filipino people will be assured of a better future which thrives on a new kind of politics that puts the country's and people's interests before anything else.

—JOHANNIS DIHAYCO,
Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu

Roco's agenda closest to farmers' agenda

THIS is to state my two reservations regarding the INQUIRER article last March 13 with the headline "Farmer Choice: Ping tops Roco in Agri list."

1. The organization to which I belong is an active member of the Alyansa Agrikultura. It was announced at the press conference which I attended that the Alyansa will not endorse a particular presidential candidate. Rather, it will seek to inform the farmers and fisherfolk of each candidate's position as it relates to key items in the Alyansa's proposed presidential agriculture agenda.

So far, Sen. Raul Roco's publicly stated positions are closest to our agenda's main recommendations. While we await further developments, this fact, together with our intention not to endorse any particular presidential candidate, argues against the conclusion: "Ping tops Roco in Agri List."

2. Contrary to the statement in the article that Senator Roco "plans to lift quantitative restrictions on rice importation," it was announced in the press conference that he wants to maintain rice quantitative restrictions beyond 2005 until the adequate agriculture support structures are in place.

We hope the above clarifies matters.

—ELVIRA M. BALADAD,
member, Alyansa ng Maliit na
Magsasaka at Mangingisda (AMMM),
Barangay Macabud,
Rodriguez, Rizal

Salvage of grounded vessel undertaken

IN REFERENCE to the editorial "But no comfort" (PDI, 1/29/04), please be informed that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is exerting all efforts to protect the Apo Reef Natural Park.

It is just unfortunate that MV Island Explorer ran aground in one of the reef areas in Apo Reef which is beyond our control.

Since Day 1 of the incident, the DENR field staff together with the Philippine Coast Guard, KKP-WWF and the PAMB of Apo Reef Natural Park has been constantly monitoring the situation.

To date, a team of nine people from SCUBA World is now in Apo Reef setting-up oil spill booms to seal the surrounding area of the ship from possible fuel leaks. The salvore barge is also there to conduct the retrieval of MV Island Explorer.

After the retrieval of the yacht, assessment of the whole reef area will be conducted to determine the extent of damage caused by MV Island Explorer, so that relative measures and a rehabilitation plan can be implemented.

—DIONISIO S. TOLENTINO JR., officer in charge-regional executive director,
Department of Environment and Natural
Resources, Region 4 Mimaropa, 1515
Roxas Blvd., Ermita, Manila

Figuring out De Quiros' opinions

IN THE "LETTERS" section (PDI, 2/27/04), a Quezon City writer questioned columnist Conrado de Quiros' frequent swipes at the President of the Republic.

The writer went on to say that PDI Reader's Advocate Raul Palabrica once explained that "fair and balanced" is a standard that people who write for the INQUIRER are expected to meet.

Palabrica also said something about the difference between "hard news" and "opinion" being the difference between unimpeachable neutrality and subjectivity or spin.

In effect, opinion writers (like De Quiros) must decide their own course. Which may or may not fit "fair and balanced" parameters that guide everyone else.

If the Quezon City complainer wants news without an attitude, the INQUIRER has pages and pages of it, seven days a week. A more objective, well-written presentation of what's going on you won't find anywhere in the Philippines, in my opinion.

If, on the other hand, he wants opinion, why not give De Quiros a second chance? He might learn something, even if he doesn't agree half the time. (I don't.)

The best way to "read" De Quiros, I've found, is with your morning coffee held a safe distance from your lap. How to stop the chest pains after reading how terrible he thinks Americans with blond hair and hazel eyes are, I have yet to figure out.

—ELLIOT ANDERSON,
P.O. Box 2769 Ozamiz City

GMA's citizenship problems

THE RECENT suspension of the franchises of drivers and operators under Piston, who launched a successful transport strike last March 1, by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo reminds us of her patent diplomatic style, that is, intimidation.

It can be remembered that when workers reiterated their demands for wage increase they were faced by truncheon wielding police and SWAT teams. When farmers stressed the need for genuine land reform, thousands of soldiers were deployed to their areas. When street vendors fought for their right to make a decent living they were attacked by armed MMDA and SWAT men. It seems that this administration has a strong penchant for violence against the Filipino people. But when we look at it, all the people want is a better life.

On the other hand, Ms Macapagal uses a different tack when dealing with big transnational corporations or foreign investors. When they demand tax cuts, she gives it. When they increase the price of their products, she allows it. And when they plan to buy our resources, she sells it wholeheartedly. In hindsight, maybe Ms Macapagal is running in the wrong country and is confused as to her nationality. And we thought Poe was the one with citizenship problems.

—MAY DIGMAN, spokesperson,
Anakpawis-UPD,
nnarayouth@hotmail.com

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40%	398,000	51,631	35,435	27,626	19,860	16,024	14,131
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60 Laguna bets sign pact vs NPA fees

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—With just three days before the formal start of the campaign period for the local elections, about 60 candidates running for local positions in Laguna yesterday signed a covenant denouncing the payment of permit-to-campaign (PTC) fees to the communist-led New People's Army (NPA) and the use of private armed groups.

Provincial elections officer Dioscoro Pajutan said the police-initiated "pledge of unity for an honest, orderly and peaceful elections" among the candidates of the different political parties in the province was the first in Southern Luzon.

He said the candidates' agreement not to give in to the NPA's demand of PTCs was a move against groups who want to destroy the integrity of the electoral process and the country's democratic institutions.

"Undeniably, the coming election is threatened by the terrorists and several armed groups like the CPP-NPA, vote-buying, use of goons, overspending by the candidates and other criminal acts directed against the honest and credible conduct of the elections," Pajutan said before the different candidates for congressman, governor, vice governor and board member of the province's four districts.

Senior Supt. Benjamin Belarmino, Calabarzon police director for logistics, said although the province was not included in the Philippine National Police's list of "areas of immediate concern," the regional police had been busy preparing for the May elections for almost six months.

"The police understand that being the symbol of representation of our people, the coming elections would be one of the most memorable events in our history. This is the hallmark of our democratic process and what our government would be. For these reasons, we are very much concerned with the plan for the conduct of a peaceful election," Belarmino said.

He said the police, just like church leaders, were "serious in the preservation of the sanctity of ballots and the credibility of the results of the elections."

Pajutan, who read the covenant, said Laguna should be "home to new and dynamic politics, not for traditional politics."

Conspicuously, several candidates for House seats were absent.

Of the 13 candidates for congressman, only five showed up.

Gubernatorial candidates, incumbent Gov. Teresita Lazaro and Rep. Rodolfo San Luis, led the signatories in the covenant signing. *Marlon Ramos and Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Suspect in murder try on Ecija town mayor held, tags politician

CABANATUAN CITY—A suspect in the assassination attempt on Mayor Marlon Marcelo, 31, of Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija, was arrested Sunday by the police, and pointed to a politician as the mastermind.

Ryan Armena, 19, of Barangay Rizal in Sta. Rosa, was one of three men who waited for Marcelo to emerge from the Holy Cross College compound in the town on Thursday for the planned ambush, police said.

When arrested on Sunday, Armena surrendered a hand grenade that was given to him allegedly by a son of a Sta. Rosa politician. Two other grenades, which Armena said he hid at a riverbank in Sta. Rosa immediately after the assassination attempt, were recovered by the police.

Two police escorts of Marcelo foiled the assassination attempt when they shot it out with a man, identified as Roger Ramirez, 38, who was set to lob a grenade at the mayor's Nissan Safari as it was approaching the gate of the Holy Cross College.

P1 million

Armena told investigators he and his companions were promised P1 million to kill Marcelo. He identified the politician involved in the plot.

The police withheld the name of the politician pending the filing of the charges against him.

Supt. Peter Guibong, Sta. Rosa police chief, said the break in the case came when one Froilan Legaspi, also of Sta. Rosa, was surrendered to him by an uncle and disclosed the plot to assassinate Marcelo.

Guibong said Legaspi had told him that he was one of the five men who plotted to kill the mayor but that they backed out at the last minute because "my conscience bothered me."

Legaspi identified four other persons who planned the ambush of Marcelo. He also identified the politician as the mastermind.

Guibong said the police were firming up the case against the politician, his son, and two other persons.

Medals

In Camp Olivas, the two police escorts who thwarted the attack on Marcelo received medals for heroism from Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director, during the command's flag-raising ceremony on Monday.

The two were PO1 Leonardo Santos and PO2 Jonathan Reyes, who received the medals equivalent to the military's bronze cross.

Querol praised Santos, 30, and Reyes, 31, for "living out the police's finest tradition of service."

Donning the medal that gleamed on his right chest, Santos told the INQUIRER in Filipino: "I am very happy because my sacrifices were recognized. But I wasn't really after the medal because as a policeman it is my duty to save lives."

Reyes said he "felt honored" by the award.

Marcelo, who was present during the awarding, said the two deserved the awards. "They really secured me," the mayor said. *Anselmo Roque and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

BEN MOSES EBREO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

LOCAL PRODUCT
A vendor shows off oversized gingers produced by indigenous farmers in the upland villages of Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya. These gingers are being exported within and outside Asia.

Gloria announces start this month of Iloilo airport

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo on Sunday announced that the construction of the Iloilo international airport would start this month.

She told a new conference that the Department of Transportation and Communication and the Taisei-Shimizu Joint Venture signed the contract for the construction of the P6.2-billion airport last March 15.

On Friday, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) signed its concurrence to the contract. JBIC is putting in P5.2 billion for the project from its Special Yen Loan Package.

Ms Macapagal also announced the awarding of the contract to build a P4.8-billion regional airport in Silay City, Negros Occidental to the Taneka-Itochu consortium.

The Iloilo airport is set to be completed in 42 months.

Ms Macapagal said the Iloilo City airport is the fourth busiest in the country in terms of the number of passengers next to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and the Mactan (Cebu) and Davao international airports.

The new airport will be constructed in a 188-hectare area straddling the towns of Sta. Barbara and Cabatuan, which is around 24 km west of Iloilo City.

It will have state-of-the-art facilities including a modern terminal, control tower buildings, and landing and navigation systems. It will have a runway 2.5 km long and 45 meters wide, a passenger terminal with 12,000 sq m of space and,a 1,281 sq m-cargo terminal.

The President said more jobs will be created and more opportunities will be opened with the opening of the Iloilo and Silay airports.

The site of the old airport in Mandurriao District here will be converted into a commercial and light industry complex, according to the President.

But a group of landowners under the Airport Concerned Alliance has accused the government of failing to provide an acceptable relocation site and livelihood programs for displaced families from the airport site.

Drilon said the government is addressing the complaint and alloted P20 million for it.

Jeepney falls into ravine in Rizal; 1 dead

PILILLA, Rizal—A Manila-bound, fully-loaded jeepney fell into a ravine in Barangay Halayhayin here at about 7:30 a.m. Sunday, killing one passenger and injuring several others, police said.

PO1 Patricio Talavera, investigating police officer, identified the fatality as Roan O. Ugot, a fourth year high school graduating student of Mabitac, Laguna.

Several passengers were brought to various hospitals here and neighboring towns for treatment, Talavera said.

Motorcycles

Investigators said that the ill-fated jeepney driven by a certain Eduardo Samaniego was negotiating a sharp curve at Barangay Halayhayin when suddenly, four motorcycles appeared at the opposite direction.

The motorcycles continued to travel toward the jeepney, prompting Samaniego to evade them and lose control as he tried to avoid a collision with the motorcycles.

Talavera said passenger accounts showed that the jeepney turned turtle three times, causing injuries to several passengers.

Ugot, the lone fatality, was pinned to death by the vehicle, which rested on one side down. She died on the spot. *Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

North Cotabato governor picks mixture of Gloria, Loren in polls

COTABATO CITY—North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol, a known supporter of Presidents Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, has declared that he is all out for a Gloria-Loren campaign drive in the coming elections.

Piñol, a reelectionist, said he believes that the victory of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Sen. Loren Legarda would ensure progress in North Cotabato and the nation.

He did not explain the reason for junking Ms Macapagal's running mate Noli de Castro, Legarda's former colleague in the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN. Both are considered political protégés of the people behind the Lopez business empire.

Legarda is the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino's candidate in the vice presidential race.

His support for the incumbent President was anchored on the financial blessings and commitment to develop North Cotabato.

Among others, he cited the President's approval of P40 million for the construction of the rural airport in Mlang town; P20 million in assistance to farmers covered by the P2.2-billion Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project in Carmen and the establishment in Barangay Amas in Kidapawan City of the "biggest corn research station in the country."

"And because of these, we decided to support President Macapagal-Arroyo. But, personally my vice president is Loren Legarda," added Piñol, president and founder of a political group known in the province as Lihok Cotabato.

"There is no pattern in our choice of candidates. Whoever is helping or willing to pursue the province's noble cause of bringing in peace, progress and stability, we will commit our all-out support," Piñol said. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Delinquent taxpayers face loss of real estate assets

DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial treasurer's office in Negros Oriental will auction off real estate properties of at least 200 big delinquent taxpayers in the province.

Acting provincial treasurer Danilo Mendez said this was the only way that these taxpayers would settle their obligation to the provincial government.

At the same time, he said, the scheme would send a signal to taxpayers that the provincial government is serious in its campaign to collect taxes.

Mendez earlier directed the treasurers of the 20 municipalities in the province to submit a list of the top 10 delinquent taxpayers in their respective towns not later than this month.

He also instructed the treasurers not to sanitize the list in such a way that it would exclude the names of public officials or influential personalities in their localities.

So far, Mendez said eight municipalities have complied with his instruction. These are the towns of San Jose, Jimalalud, Manjuyod, Pamplona, Sta. Catalina, Sibulan, Tayasan and Vallahermoso.

He, however, declined to name the delinquent taxpayers in these lists without a go signal from the provincial board.

Mendez said he expects the treasurers of the other 12 municipalities to submit their lists on or before March 31. *Romy G. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Jeep strike pushes through in Angeles

ANGELES CITY—Drivers on strike to demand a P1-fare increase and a rollback in oil prices crippled public transportation in this city outside the Clark Special Economic Zone yesterday.

They also disrupted transportation in the rest of Pampanga, especially the capital city of San Fernando, reports gathered by the INQUIRER showed.

By 2 p.m., the Pinag-isang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston), through its Pampanga spokesperson Waldy Santos, rated the success of the drivers' protest in Angeles City at 95 percent and in other parts of the province at 60 percent.

Santos said more than 20,000 drivers joined the strike, the second Piston had launched since Feb. 23 and 24.

Yesterday's strike pushed through as Petron on Sunday night increased the price of gasoline by 60 centavos and kerosene by 40 centavos a liter.

Santos said this was the fourth increase in oil prices this year.

Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, Pampanga police chief, said only the routes in Arayat, Magalang, Porac and Mabalacat towns and Angeles City were affected.

Mendoza said few students and workers were stranded because the strike began three hours late of the 5 a.m. schedule. Local Piston leaders announced they would lift the protest at 7 p.m. yesterday.

Police said they were ready to field buses and trucks by 5 p.m.

The protest, Santos said in a statement, "intended to show the Macapagal government just how dissatisfied the drivers are with the way her supposed pro-people administration has been dealing with their demands."

Aside from the fare increase and price rollback, drivers also want the removal of "excessive fees compulsorily collected" by government agencies, he said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

ILIGAN CITY. Ping Lacson and his "kamay na bakal" (iron hand) which symbolizes his platform of strong leadership against corrupt government officials.

Iron-fisted man as 'idol'

From page A1

ing votes for the presidency. Aside from a Jesus Is Lord place of service at every other corner, Bulacan has a large Filipino-Chinese population—said to make up most of Lacson's supporters and financiers. This would explain the large turnout of cars in the motorcade.

Equally large in number were residents who spilled out of their homes into the street as soon as they heard Ping's political jingle blasting from a vehicle, followed by this announcement: *"Nandito po si Ping Lacson, kumakandidato para presidente* (Ping Lacson is here campaigning for the presidency)."

Movie star

Traffic stopped, people waited on the sidewalk, craning their necks for a glimpse of Lacson or his clenched fist that symbolizes "*kamay na bakal* (iron hand)," his chosen political image. People want to shake the iron hand, ask for an autograph, some stickers and comic books, or like this *sari-sari* store owner, inquire about a poster as big as his signboard.

Why will Bulakeños vote for Lacson?

"*Pulis ang tatay ko* (My father is a policeman)," said one.

"*Lalaban siya sa kurakot.* (He will fight corruption)," said another.

"*Guwapo! Mukhang artista* (Good-looking! Like a movie star)," thrilled another.

Lacson wore a red-and-white checkered short-sleeve shirt, easy-fit denims and black leather shoes. Well-groomed, clean-cut, hair gelled in place, he wore titanium-framed rimless glasses in the lightest shade of blue which gave him an *artista* (movie star) air and, at the same time, made him look hip. He shook hands, mumbled some words, and worked the crowd almost as hard as his bodyguards.

MR. LACSON GOES TO COMELEC. With wife Alice when he files his candidacy. BOY CABRIDO

Even gays love Ping

A gay man with badly dyed brown hair came toward Lacson and almost knocked down a journalist. He pulled Lacson's outstretched hand and planted a kiss on his cheek. The gay man looked excited and sped off. The bodyguards looked nervous and started to sweat. Lacson looked the same. He gave nothing away, save for an enigmatic smile.

A few weeks back, Lacson had been a dinner guest at the INQUIRER and one journalist sat beside him for two hours, hoping to shoot questions that would have him spilling his guts out.

Excerpts from the interview:

What is your ring tone? It sounds like a marching song.

I don't know. It's the first one (on the ring tone menu).

How many people have you killed?

I've lost count.

Do you mind being asked that question all the time?

I don't mind being asked that question. I don't know (how many people I've killed). *Kasi pag may encounter, maraming putukan* (If there's an encounter, there's a lot of shooting). You don't know *kung ikaw ang nakatama* (if you've hit someone).

Why he's slim

Have you ever been shot?

Yes. But not in an encounter. It was an accident. (At the Philippine Military Academy), one of my classmates was unloading and loading (a gun). *Pumutok* (It fired). I was clinically dead for a few seconds, but I survived. *Tinamaan ang organs. Pinutulan nila ako ng* intestine (The bullet hit an organ. They had to cut part of my intestine). I have a four- to five-inch long scar here (points to right lower side).

Are you saying you have a shorter intestine after you were shot?

Yes.

Is this why you're slim?

Siguro. Tsaka mahina ako kumain. (Perhaps. And I don't eat a lot).

Would you rather be loved or feared?

Sana (If possible) both. If it can't be both, I'd rather be feared than loved. Feared by my subordinates. This is my idea of *kamay na bakal*(iron hand). Not feared by the people I serve.

Do you go to church?

Pag may kasal. Ninong ako (If there's a wedding. I'm a sponsor).

Military tone

Every few minutes or so, the interview would be interrupted by strains from a marching song—his cell phone was ringing. He would look at the caller ID and promptly press the reject button. His screen saver was a political poster with the Philippine flag in the background.

During dessert, INQUIRER editors decided to jump in and ask Lacson more important questions, like does he have names for his would-be Cabinet or will they all come from the military?

His response went something like this: Secret.

How does he feel now that they have revived the Kuratong Baleleng mess for the sixth time? His candid reply: "*Manhid na ako* (I'm already numb)."

That wasn't me

How does he plan to erase the image that he tortured political prisoners during martial law? His easy explanation: "That wasn't me, that was (Chief Supt. Reynaldo) Berroya . We were both in (the) MISG (Military Intelligence Security Group). But my concentration was kidnap for ransom, Berroya and (Chief Supt. Eduardo) Matillano handled the insurgency cases."

He has had his share of bad press. Is he vindictive? His reassuring answer: "I've been hit so many times—*may narinig ba kayo* (Did you hear anything from me)? I believe media should be left alone. Let them do their thing. *Ang pinakaganti ko siguro,* (My worst revenge perhaps is) to ignore."

What is his stand on the population issue? His firm answer: Two children per couple. Zero population growth. Contraceptives.

No wonder Lacson didn't stop at the church in Obando. It would have sent out mixed signals. Besides, didn't the Catholic Church once refer to him as a Prince of Darkness?

Like royalty

Whether he is or not, Lacson was certainly treated like royalty in Obando. He weaved in and out of traffic, working the crowd, hardly sweating under the mid-morning heat. Finally, he was at the public market.

The gay man with the badly dyed brown hair was there again. He pushed through the crowd and the bodyguards until he reached Lacson, pulled his hand a second time, and planted two kisses on his cheek.

The crowd roared with laughter. An elderly woman complained: "*Ano ba? Nakadalawa ka na!* (What's up? You've had two already)."

Meanwhile, Lacson's bodyguards cued a vehicle to come and fetch him.

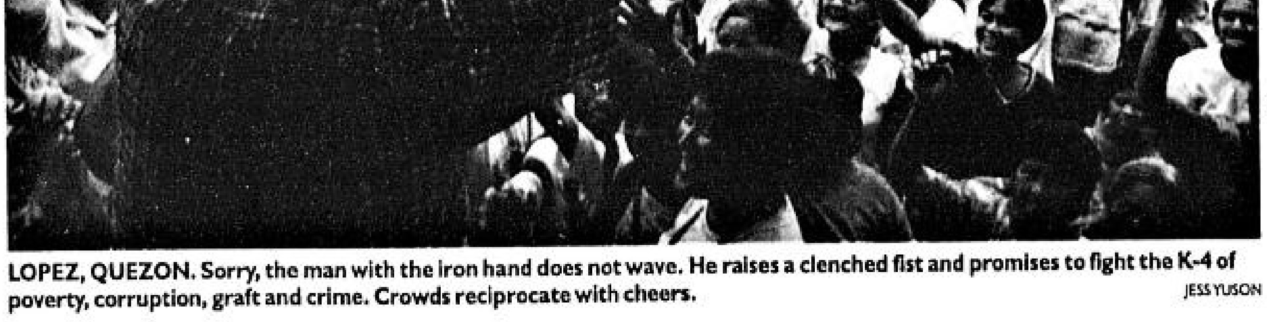
He had been mobbed, walked in a muddy public market, and shook hands with fish and meat vendors, yet his shoes were still shiny.

Idol! *(To be continued)*

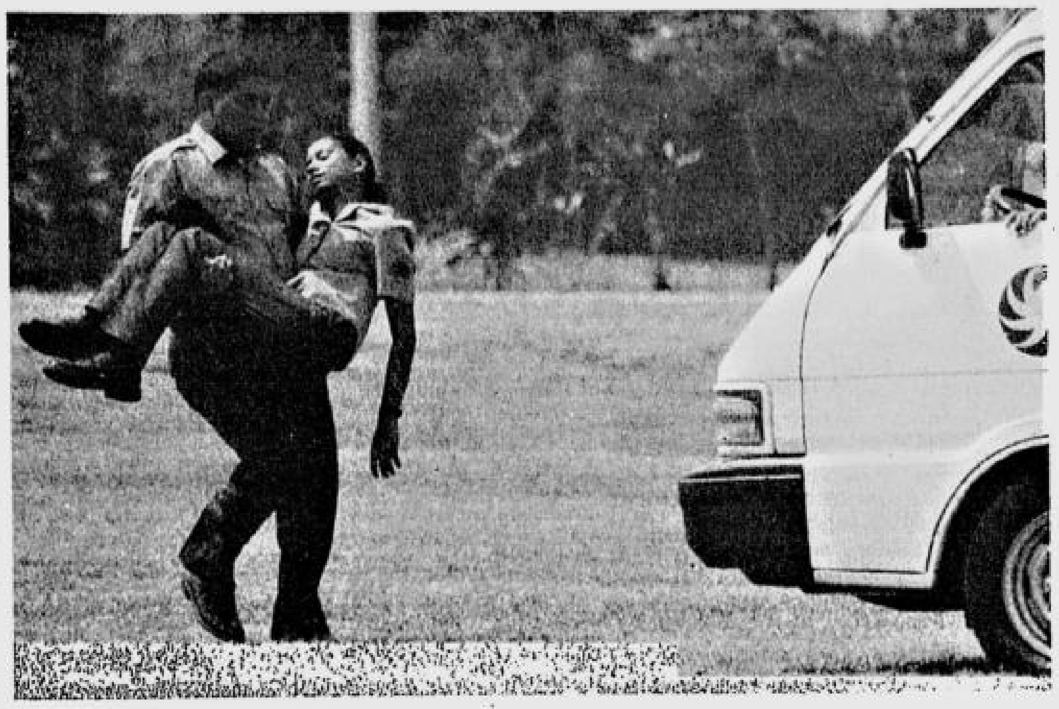
PASIG CITY. De rigueur in any campaign is kissing babies. Even the usually deadpan Ping obliges. AFP

BOCAUE, BULACAN. Idol! An ardent supporter gives Lacson a hug and catches him off-guard.

CARDONA, RIZAL. Politics is a gamble. Lacson tries his hand at billiards during a campaign sortie. JESS YUSON



LOPEZ, QUEZON. Sorry, the man with the iron hand does not wave. He raises a clenched fist and promises to fight the K-4 of poverty, corruption, graft and crime. Crowds reciprocate with cheers. JESS YUSON



CAN'T STAND THE HEAT
An Army officer carries a female officer to a waiting ambulance during the celebration on Monday of the 107th Philippine Army Day in Fort Bonifacio. The officer collapsed due to the intense heat. VAL HANDUMON

Muslims want say on Metro ID plan

By Christian V. Esguerra

CONSULT us first, or see us in court.

A multi-sectoral group of Muslims questioning what they called a "selective" implementation of a proposed identification system for Muslims in Metro Manila said yesterday it would seek a temporary restraining order stopping its adoption if no discussions are made on the issue.

The 500,000-strong Philippine Islamic Council said consultations should first be made in all affected communities before they adopt the system meant to combat terrorism.

"A selective implementation is highly questionable," said Taha Basman, PIC president and a member of the government's National Peace and Order Council.

There is nothing wrong with distributing identification cards among Muslims if it is patterned after the existing census system, Basman added.

But he said he did not like the idea of seeing Muslim professionals line up in barangay halls for the cards.

"We don't want our communities to look like concentration camps," he said.

Basman also sees politics in the ID system, claiming that the timing is "highly suspicious" since its implementation comes close to the May 10 elections.

But the Philippine National Police yesterday stressed that the proposal came from Muslim leaders, not from the government.

"This is an honest-to-goodness project," said Director Ricardo de Leon, National Capital Region Police Office chief. "It is not being imposed on anybody, particularly on Muslims. Communities may adopt or reject it."

Leaders proposed to distribute IDs among their respective constituents during the monthly consultative meeting with the PNP more than a week ago. De Leon said the system was the leaders' way of helping the anti-terrorism drive.

The NCRPO chief also quoted an official of the Quiapo Muslim community in Manila who said his area already has an ID system to prevent criminals from infiltrating their neighborhood.

New cop inspectors now prowl the streets

By Luige del Puerto

WHAT could police inspectors learn from beat patrolmen?

Apparently, a lot. With this in mind, the police yesterday sent hundreds of new police inspectors to take on the job of watching over the streets of the metropolis.

The newly-promoted policemen have just graduated from a Special Action Force course, which is part of their training as junior officers of the Philippine National Police.

Their first on-the-job training is to "pound the beat," like rookie cops, according to Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela, head of the Eastern Police District.

"The instruction is to let them feel what it's like to be a patrol cop," he said.

"After all, they soon will become the next precinct or station commanders," he said.

About 100 new police inspectors have been assigned to walk the streets of Eastern Metro Manila.

Valenzuela said that as officers, they are expected to act as models of honesty and integrity to beat policemen.

Their OJT is expected to last for six months, meaning they could be in Metro Manila during the election period.

Drive vs trip-cutting by buses intensified

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority has intensified its drive against trip-cutting buses. But then the MMDA and bus operators could not agree on what cutting trips mean.

Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association president Claire Dela Fuente told the INQUIRER yesterday that they welcomed the MMDA's warning against drivers who cut trips because this was clearly a violation.

But she added that cutting trips meant a bus driver would ask his passengers to get off, cutting short his trip, and pick up new passengers and go back.

She said that buses which were not carrying passengers should be permitted to turn back.

But MMDA Traffic Operations Center executive Director Angelito Vergel De Dios said that all bus drivers who would not complete their route, even those who decide to cut trips because they do not have passengers on board, would be fined and their buses impounded.

For instance, a bus driver going to Monumento, whose route is Baclaran to Monumento, might decide to cut his trip in Cubao because no passenger is on board.

He would then take a turn, pick up passengers in Cubao going back to Baclaran instead of completing his route to Monumento.

While Dela Fuente said that this should be allowed, De Dios explained that this was still a violation of the bus' franchise, which specifies the bus' route, since other passengers going to Monumento could be waiting in areas after Cubao.

He added that operators could also be held accountable should the MMDA find that the company officials encourage or tolerate their drivers cutting trips.

Dela Fuente said she would clear things up with the MMDA.

The MMDA became stricter with trip-cutters after Chair Bayani Fernando discovered that some buses were not plying their entire routes and were cutting trips to be able to pick up passengers in crowded areas like Cubao, causing traffic.

Let the rains come in May, NWRB prays

By Tina Santos

THE CONTINUOUS decline of the water level at Angat Dam may affect this year's cropping season, according to the National Water Resources Board.

Ramon Alikpala, NWRB executive director, said farmers in Central Luzon, particularly Bulacan and Pampanga, might have to start planting their crops in July instead of June if the Angat water level reach its critical point of 180 meters.

"If the rains don't come in May and the water level continues to drop, we will no longer be able to supply water for irrigation," Alikpala explained.

Alikpala also cited the possibility of having the El Niño weather phenomenon this year.

However, he said the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) has yet to detect signs that this summer would drag on longer than usual.

Forecasters project that the first rainfall will come in the second or third week of May.

Comelec, police gear up for local poll campaign

AS THE local campaign begins on Thursday, police and local Commission on Elections officials are gearing up for another round of battle against campaign posters and streamers.

In Malabon City, elections officer Villamor Igne told the INQUIRER yesterday that they were prepared to tear down posters of local candidates which would be posted outside designated areas.

He advised local candidates and their supporters to put posters and streamers only in common poster areas so as not to waste their campaign funds because these would only be torn down.

The Comelec has modified an earlier rule of a common poster area for every 10,000 district voters to a poster area for every 5,000 voters, Igne said.

Thus, common poster areas in Malabon City has been increased from 16 to 32. White streamers identify the common poster areas in the city.

City police chief Freddie Panen also said they are ready to assist the Comelec in the "Oplan Baklas" against campaign posters.

The police, the local Comelec and church organizations have also set up a city election monitoring center to ensure orderly campaign. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

This Guy has connections

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

WHY DID Finance Secretary Julieta Amatong stop the investigation of Michael Chua Guy, a foreign exchange tycoon, by her own people?

Amatong issued the cease order to the men at the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (Rips) of the Department of Finance, who were looking into Guy's tax refunds.

Rips probes irregularities committed by officials and employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Bureau of Customs and the finance department. Rips is the finance department counterpart of the police's internal affairs office.

What was surprising was that Amatong reportedly issued the order on Saturday night to the Rips chief, Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, according to one of its members.

As we all know, government offices don't hold office on weekends. Why couldn't she have waited till yesterday, Monday, the first working day of the week, to issue the order?

A source at the finance department said that Guy talked with Amatong at her home last Saturday. There and then, the finance secretary called up Bonoan, the source said.

Why did Guy go to Amatong on a weekend when he could have gone to her office at the Department of Finance on Roxas Blvd., Manila?

Because, according to my source, he was worried that the Rips was closing in on him on his income tax payments, as well as his withholding tax and value added tax payments, in connection with his foreign exchange transactions.

The source gave me finance department documents purportedly showing that the government refunded Guy:

—In 1998, P38,839.02 on his income tax; P19,111.04 on his value added tax (VAT); P12,842.23 on his withholding tax.

—In 1999, P12,864.33 on VAT; P70,260.01 on withholding tax.

—2000, P54,577.06 on income tax returns; P72,778.53 on VAT; P6,072.73.

—2001, P9,827.30 on income tax returns; P213,144.59 on VAT.

—2003, P278,117.98 on income tax; P90,692.87 on VAT.

* * *

Guy's foreign exchange transactions every month, according to the Rip source, are from US$2 million to $5 million.

"And that's only a conservative estimate, because Mr. Guy belongs to the Binondo Central Bank," said the source. The Binondo Central Bank is a conglomerate of all illegal dollar transactions based in Chinatown.

* * *

How did Guy learn that finance department agents were on his trail?

In a letter to Bangko Sentral Deputy Gov. Alberto Reyes, Finance Undersecretary Bonoan asked for all foreign transactions on all banks of Guy's MG Forex Corp.

Apparently, a Bangko Sentral insider tipped off Guy about Bonoan's request to Reyes.

* * *

My finance department source said that it was highly unlikely a foreign exchange dealer would be given refunds by the BIR because of the big amount of money earned on forex transactions.

Guy apparently has connections at the BIR and other government agencies like the Bangko Sentral, my source said.

And, if it's true that he went to Secretary Amatong, then Guy has tentacles in high places in government.

* * *

The campaign gimmick of Jinggoy Estrada, the former President's son, is amusing. And also amazing in its brazenness.

During a campaign sortie in Cotabato City, Jinggoy said in a speech that he was his father's son. He said that when his father grew a moustache, he grew one. The elder Estrada has a big belly, and so does he. Erap became San Juan mayor and so did he. When Erap went to jail, so did he. His father has many women and so does he.

To please the predominantly Muslim crowd, Jinggoy said he envied Muslim men because of their beautiful women. And, hear this, he wanted his "next mate" to be a Muslim.

Que barbaridad ! Jinggoy would do and say anything just to get votes, even to the extent of making a fool of himself.

In his campaign sortie in Zambales Jinggoy would probably also say that he envies Aeta men because of their beautiful lasses. And he would also marry an Aeta!

* * *

Some enterprising wives of generals and colonels at the Western Command (Wescom) in Palawan made a killing during the recent Balikatan military exercise by demanding commissions from owners of makeshift restaurants and bars set up inside the camp.

The restaurants and bars were meant to cater to the American troops there.

The officers' wives allegedly collected a percentage from the sale of beer and food bought by US servicemen.

The wives allegedly also took over a restaurant that was heavily patronized by the American troops. They did this by reportedly making up a story that the owner supposedly violated some provisions in the contract with Wescom authorities.

Hoy, mga kagalang-galang na mga heneral at koronel, rendahan naman ninyo ang mga asawa n'yo!

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The PANA calls on all allied institutions or associations to express in very clear terms their support for the AdBoard and its vital role in the self-regulation of the advertising industry.

Lastly, the PANA calls on the owners and management of Destileria Limtuaco & Co., Inc., and its advertising agency and suppliers, to adhere to the same principles of self-regulation, and to voluntarily withdraw immediately all advertising material with the controversial copy line "Nakatikim ka na ba ng kinse años?"

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'TV kids are poor listeners'

By Blanche S. Rivera

WATCHING too much television makes children poor listeners.

A literacy test recently conducted on selected Grade 1 pupils in Metro Manila showed poor "phonological awareness" skills, or the ability to associate letters, words and pictures with their sound. Listening is the building block of reading, according to educators.

Dr. Felicitas Pado, a teacher of beginning reading for 19 years, said the problem is observed globally to too much media exposure of children.

"We have media babies. They're used to viewing. So our pupils have poor listening skills. That's a global problem," said Pado, who is with the University of the Philippines.

Educators like Pado are trying to address the literacy problem among Grade 1 pupils. The Department of Education estimates that up to four out of 10 pupils finish Grade 1 without knowing how to read.

The test was part of the basic reading program undertaken by DepEd officials with the fast-food chain McDonald's.

A total of 4,200 Grade 1 pupils in 14 public schools in Metro Manila underwent the reading program last year.

Pado, who administered the pretest in July and the posttest last February to selected pupils, said the pupils greatly improved their reading and writing skills with the program's help. But she asked Grade 1 teachers to help children develop their listening skills.

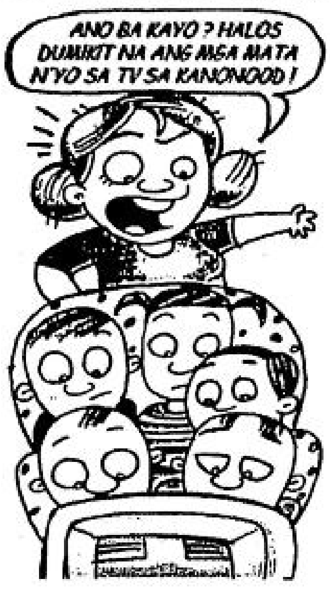
"Since beginning reading lies heavily on sound-symbol relationship, listening is an important skill for beginning readers," she said. "The result showed that greater emphasis should still be placed on teaching this skill."

She said the pre-test scores showed "very poor listening ability" among the beginners, though this greatly improved later as shown by the post-test scores.

She said the pupils did not have much problem with visual discrimination skills, or the ability to differentiate letters and words.

"The results show that the children's visual discrimination skills are better developed than their phonological awareness skills," she said.

Under its "Bright Minds Read" program, McDonald's, with the help of DepEd, trained 70 Grade 1 teachers how to better teach their pupils the basics of reading.


ANO BA KAYO ? HALOS DUMIKIT NA ANG MGA MATA N'YO SA TV SA KANONOOD !

Cops draw up security plan for Holy Week

By Tina Santos

WITH barely two weeks before the Holy Week, the National Capital Region Police Office has started drafting security measures in anticipation of the annual trek of Metro Manila residents to the provinces.

NCRPO Director Ricardo de Leon said he has already coordinated with officials of the Department of Transportation and Communication, the Metro Manila Development Authority and the local governments on measures to ensure the safety of commuters and motorists.

As part of the measures, De Leon has tasked the members of the NCRPO Traffic Enforcement Group to synchronize its efforts in ensuring the smooth flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the Lenten rush.

Likewise, district directors and station commanders have also been tasked to provide security in different bus terminals, seaports and airports.

The NCRPO also asked the public to take necessary precautions against street criminals, particularly Akyat-Bahay gang members who usually take advantage of the season when most residents are out of their homes.

He advised the public to coordinate with their respective barangay officials and seek the conduct of regular patrols around their unattended homes during the Holy Week.

LTFRB: We're following rules

THE GOVERNMENT is not delaying the granting of a fare increase to public utility vehicles to help save the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

This was stressed yesterday by Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) Chair Maria Elena Bautista in reaction to the claim of the leader of a big jeepney group.

"We're not delaying anything, we're following proper procedures," Bautista said.

Earlier, Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (Piston) president Mar Garvida said the LTFRB was just trying to protect the image of the President to commuters.

He said the agency would probably grant a hike in fares after the May elections.

But Bautista explained that the jeepney transport groups would have to wait out the process they set before acting on their petition for a P1.50 fare increase.

The jeepney drivers were given until yesterday to submit their position paper. *Tina Santos*

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Si Hiansen ba ang bagong Acsa?

Nagulat na lang si Ernie Hiansen at ang staff niya sa One Stop Shop Tax Credit and Duty Drawback Center nang inakusahan sila ng NBI: sangkot daw sila sa panibagong tax credit scam. Ang problema: katulad ni Acsa Ramirez, sila mismo ang bumulatlat ng bagong kaso. Anong nangyari? Ang inside story, mula mismo kay Hiansen, ngayong alas-10 ng gabi, sa ABC.

ABC

SPORTS TV Compiled by L. Mangulat

BASKETBALL: NBA Greatest Games-Bucks vs Pacers, Game 5, 2000 Eastern First Round; 8:30 a.m.; Solar Sports—Indiana survives a stubborn Milwaukee squad in this do-or-die encounter.
NBA-Rockets vs Blazers; 11 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports—Houston tries to take-off against Portland.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

SPORTS

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

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Assistant Editor **Edwin M. Villanueva**

Embattled Shell fires Moran

Kanapi: He failed to fulfill expectations

By June Navarro

FIRED.

Fed up with the shortcomings of its American head coach, Shell yesterday sacked John Moran two days after the Turbochargers lost what had looked like a won game against the FedEx Express.

Shell team manager Bobby Kanapi said Moran failed to fulfill the expectations of the management after the Turbochargers tallied a 1-5 win-loss record in the ongoing PBA Gran Matador Fiesta Conference.

Moran's discharge, however, was triggered by his supposed failure to shuffle his men efficiently during the crucial moments of the Turbochargers' 120-116 overtime defeat Saturday to the Express in Antipolo City.

"He could have used a 10-man rotation instead of eight and won the game for us. Simply put, we were coached out," Kanapi told the INQUIRER.

Jig Mendoza, one of Moran's deputies and the only holdover during coach Perry Ronquillo's time, will take over the coaching reins on an interim basis.

The Turbochargers were on the way to victory when Moran benched a hot-shooting Ronald Tubid in favor of Chris Calaguio in the final minutes of regulation. That helped the Express get back into the game and send it into overtime.

In the extension period, Mike Maddox and Vergel Meneses pieced together a pair of sterling performances that knocked out the Turbochargers.

Tubid scored half of his 12 points during Shell's breakaway early in the fourth before Maddox took over.

"We are looking for a new head coach, but as of now we are still preparing a short list of candidates who could succeed Moran," said Kanapi, who declined to mention any candidate in the team's short list of possible replacements.

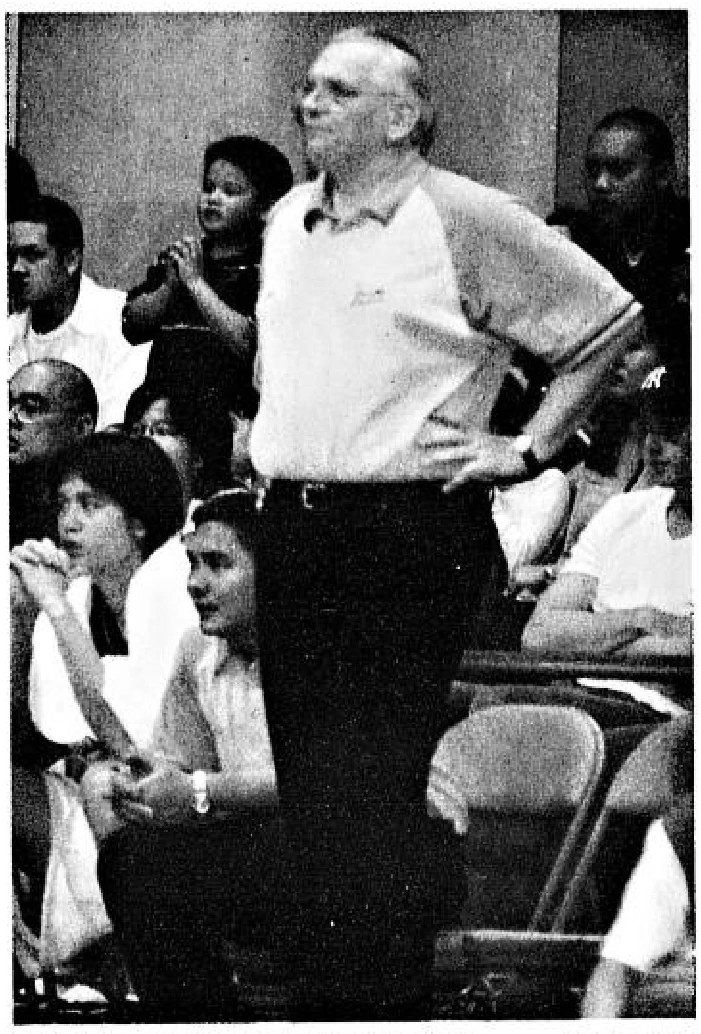
A source within the Shell organization, however, said Leo Austria is on top of that roster.

Moran succeeded Ronquillo in January and subjected the Turbochargers to abnormal midnight practice sessions apart from the strenuous workouts in the morning and afternoon.

Moran, whose only claim to fame was a coaching stint alongside former Indiana University coach Bobby Knight in the US-NCAA during the late '80s, was also vilified for benching Rich Alvarez during Shell's tournament opener against Barangay Ginebra.

For that, Alvarez suffered the ignominy of being the first top rookie pick in PBA history to miss action in his coming-out party.

"The team learned a lot from Moran. He taught the proper mindset and right motivation for the players. Unfortunately, he failed to deliver the results the management had wanted," said Kanapi. *With a report from Dennis U. Eroa*



MORAN: He failed to shuffle his men efficiently. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Kidd hopes rest helps injured knee

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—New Jersey Nets All-Star guard Jason Kidd hopes a little extended rest will make his aching left knee feel better and get him ready for the playoffs next month.

Kidd, who was placed on the injured list with a bone bruise Friday, said doctors are still looking at an MRI exam to decide whether he needs more than rest.

"Rest has helped in the past," Kidd said Sunday before the Nets played the Dallas Mavericks. "We'll see what a little more rest can do."

Dr. Michael Kelly, the Nets' orthopedic surgeon, has examined the MRI that Kidd had Friday. Dr. David Altchek of the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City will give a second opinion, Kidd said.

Kidd said no one has told either him or Jeff Schwartz, his agent, that he will need athroscopic surgery.

"You go with what the doctors are saying and you kind of take it as a bone bruise and get some rest," Kidd said.

Kidd does not know how long potential surgery would sideline him. *AP*

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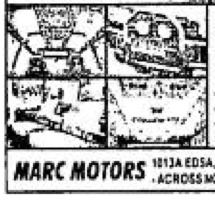

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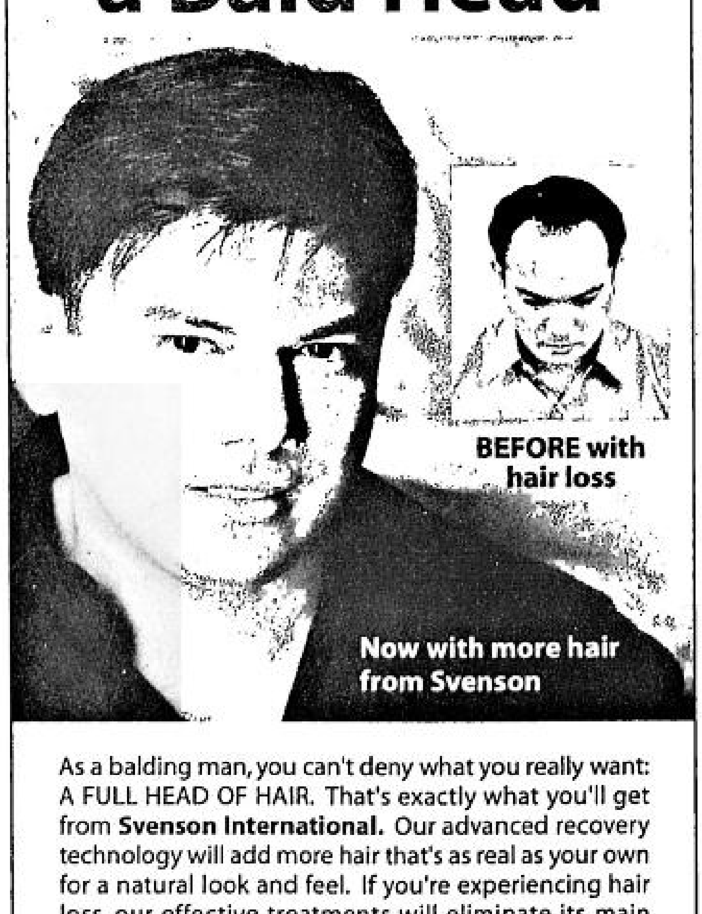

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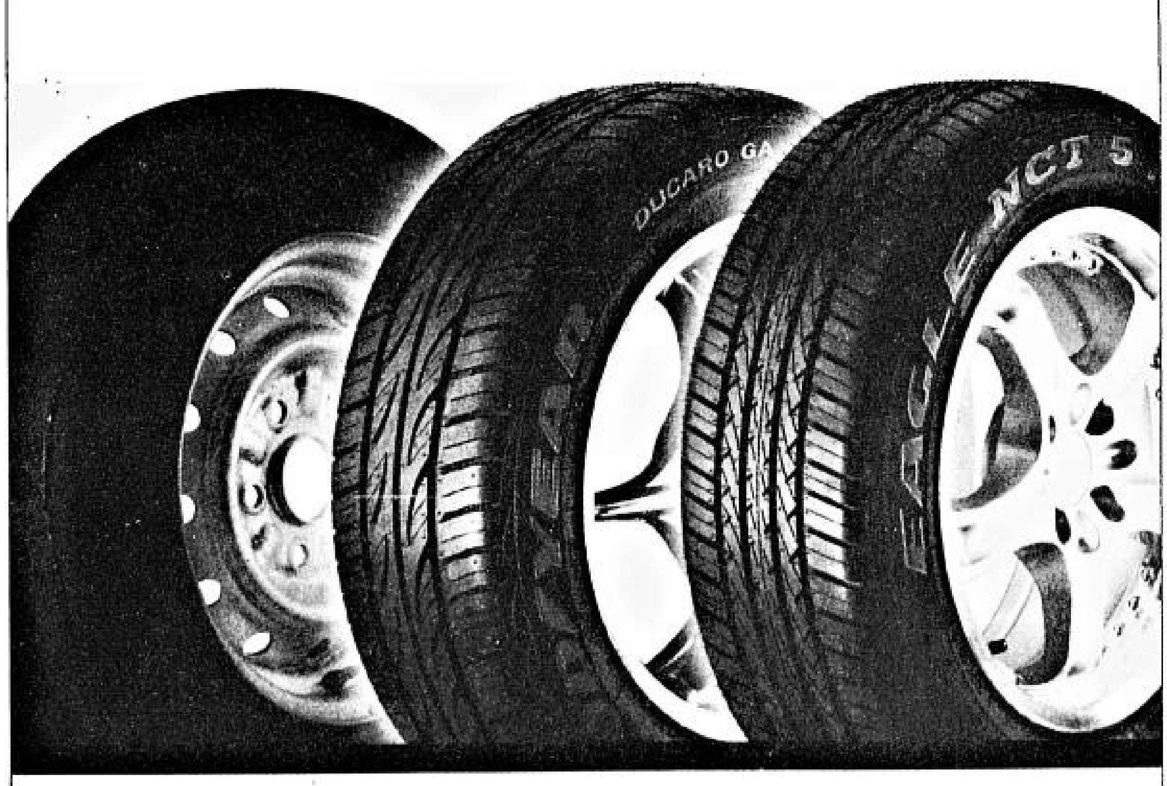

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Pinoy boxers get the door in Olympic qualifying

GUANGZHOU, China—For the first time in 17 years, the Philippines will go home empty-handed from an international boxing tournament.

This came after featherweight Roel Laguna followed three other RP Alaxan FR Team fighters to the exit Sunday night in the China Unicom championships, the second Asian qualifying tournament for the Athens Olympics boxing event, at the Tianhe Gymnasium here.

Laguna lost a two-point lead going into the third round and failed to mount a significant rally in the fourth and last round to bow to Akbar Aradihir of Iran, 31-27.

Light flyweight Harry Tañamor, Ferdie Gamo and Genebert Basadre earlier lost their first-round bouts, but not after world boxing officials realized that the tournament's computer scoring program was "malfunctioning."

The discovery threw the tournament into disarray and raised a howl of protests from among delegates from 33 nations.

The debacle of the Filipinos, sponsored in the tournament by Alaxan FR, Pacific Heights, Accel, Family Rubbing Alcohol and the Philippine Sports Commission, duplicated the embarrassment suffered by another Philippine team that saw action in the 1987 Asian Boxing Championships in Malaysia.

"This is a wake-up call not only for our team but also the entire boxing community. The boys, as well as the coaching staff, did their jobs well but circumstances beyond our means ruined our chances," said Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (ABAP) president Manny Lopez, who has requested a thorough inquiry into the computer controversy.

Lopez is also the secretary-general of the Federation of Asian Amateur Boxing.

"I am sure that if not for that alleged malfunction in the system, at least two of our boys will still be out there in the hunt for Olympics berth," he said.

Filipino boxers will also vie in Asia's third and final qualifying tournament in Pakistan in May.

The "computer malfunction" was discovered only late Saturday. Prof. Anwar Chowdry, the president of the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA), personally saw how the punch-hits credited to a Thai boxer fighting a Pakistani increase inexplicably on the computer.

Pakistani middleweight Hamed Ali Khan led Sonchai Chemlong of Thailand, 17-12, with only five seconds left in the bout when the computer screen suddenly flashed 17-17 as the final bell rang.

ASIAN CITIES CHESS

Tagaytay trips Pasay; Chinese take control

Standings after 2 rounds:

7.5 points—Guangzhou (CHI), **7.5 points**; **6.0**—Tagaytay, Mandaluyong; **5.5**—Pavlodar (KAZ), Kuala Lumpur (MAS); **5.0**—Jakarta (INA), Samarinda (INA), Tanauan; **4.5**—Tehran (IRA), Dubai (UAE); **4.0**—Sanaa (YEM), Kanchipuram (IND), Pasay; **3.0**—Hong Kong; **2.0**—Sydney (AUS), Doha (QAT); **1.0**—Macau, Ho Chi Minh (VIE); **0.5**—Bandar Seri Begawan (BRU).

TAGAYTAY—Grandmaster Joey Antonio and Asian Zonal champion Ronald Dableo pulled off their second straight victories as Tagaytay trounced Pasay, 3-1, yesterday to move into a second-place tie with Mandaluyong behind front-runner Guangzhou after two rounds of the 14th Asian Cities Chess Championship at the International Convention Center here.

Substituting for fellow GM Eugene Torre on board 1, Antonio outwitted Fide Master Emmanuel Senador in 51 moves of a Slav Defense with the black pieces to power the hosts to their second straight 3-1 decision in the nine-round, 15-nation tournament.

International Master Dableo whipped National Master Jerome Balico in 31 moves of another Slav for the team's second full point.

GM Bong Villamayor, taking over on board 2, drew with IM Barlo Nadera after a marathon 70 moves of an Irregular Opening and teammate IM Jayson Gonzales halved the point with Oliver Dimakiling in 20 moves of an English game.

Mandaluyong, which began its campaign with a 3.5-0.5 conquest of fancied Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam Sunday night, kept itself in the hunt for the prestigious Dubai Cup by eking out a 2.5-1.5 win over second seed Jakarta despite the setback suffered by IM Mark Paragua.

Tagaytay and Mandaluyong stood in second place with 6 points each, 1.5 points behind top-ranked Guangzhou after two rounds of the event organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines and the Tagaytay City government.

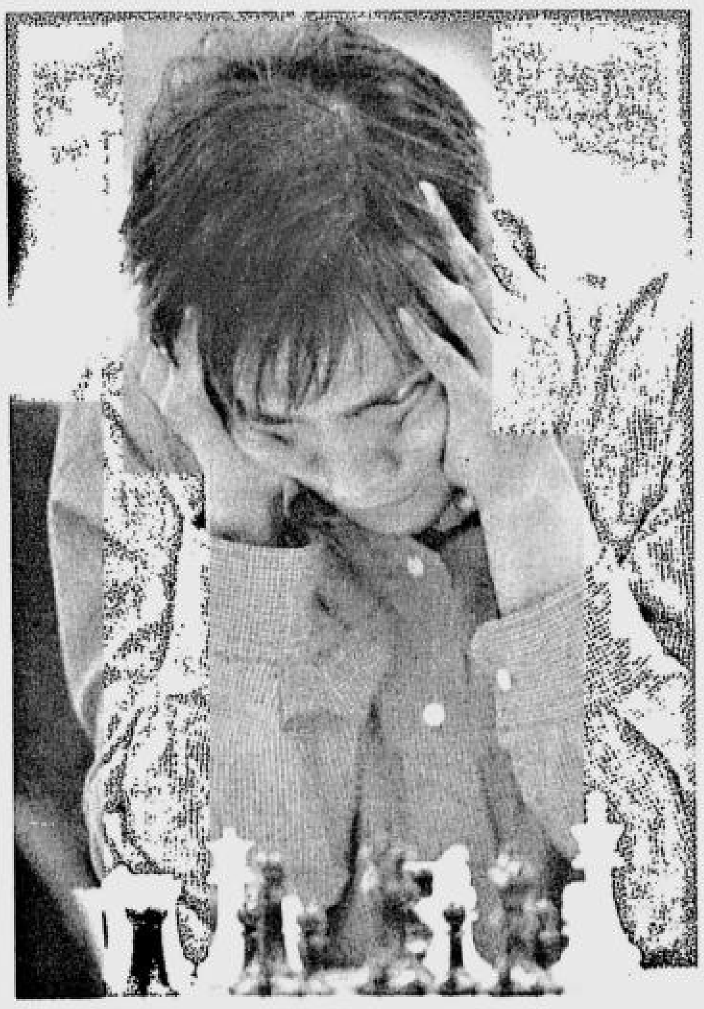
The Chinese team, with the tournament's highest-rated player, IM Liang Chong, playing impressively again on board 1, followed up its 4-0 whitewash of Yemen's Sanaa with a 3.5-0.5 whipping of Iran's Tehran.

Torre was the host's unlikely goat Sunday, bowing to little-known Nathanael Sitturu in 35 moves of a Benoni in the only game that marred Tagaytay's otherwise easy 3-1 win over Samarinda of Indonesia.

Torre had asked team captain Chris Mangalubnan to replace him in the match against Pasay.

Paragua, the country's only triple gold medalist in the 22nd Vietnam Southeast Asian Games, fell into a mating trap by Indonesian sensation Susanto Megaranto and resigned in 39 moves of a Sicilian Sozim Variation. Before he yielded, Paragua stood on the brink of a mate or the loss of his queen.

For the second straight round, defending champion Pavlodar of Kazakhstan played without a fourth man but still crushed Hong Kong, 3-1, and moved into a tie for fourth with Kuala Lumpur at 5.5 points.



ANTONIO makes an equally brilliant move on board 1. EDWIN BACASMAS

IM Evgeni Igorov again defaulted his match, this time against Anwar Mohammad because his flight to Manila was held up in Bangkok.

Tanauan held Kuala Lumpur to a 2-all standoff and tied Samarinda for sixth at 5 points. The Indonesians dumped Macau, 4-0.

Torre was expected to return to duty in the third round late last night against Guangzhou. *With a report from Marlon Bernardino*

RP's Abapo tackles IBF Pan-Pac champ

UNBEATEN Bart Abapo figures in the most important fight of his career to date as he takes on IBF Pan Pacific lightweight champion Joey de Ricardo of Indonesia in a 10-round fight at the RCTI Studio in Jakarta tonight.

Abapo, one of the stars of Cebu's Ala Stable and ranked no. 1 among the country's junior lightweights, remains undefeated with 14 wins, 1 draw and 8 knockouts.

He totes a better card against the 23-year-old De Ricardo, who has 6 wins, no loss, with 4 KO's.

The Abapo-Ricardo showdown recalls memories of an old rivalry. Abapo's trainer, Ala Villamor, had also once fought Ricardo's trainer, Said Iskandar.

In that bout on Jan. 11, 1992, Villamor scored a third-round knockout win over the Indon.

Villamor, however, will not be on Abapo's corner today as he is busy preparing young "ALA Boys" for their fights in Manila and Mandaue City on March 25 and April 4.

Leyte's Danny Bactol will act as Abapo's chief second for tonight's battle.

This will be Abapo's second fight in Indonesia following his Feb. 23 technical knockout victory over another Indon, Gideon Salasa.

"Abapo's got too much amateur experience. De Ricardo is in for a long night," said one of the fighter's supporters in the ALA Gym.

"As long as Abapo does not get (cheated in the scoring), he will prevail," he added. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

SPORTSWATCH

Shuttlers begin battles in b'minton on TV

THE PHILIPPINE Badminton Tournament will telecast another season of exciting badminton action in the 2004 All-Star Invitational. Featuring the country's best badminton players, the tournament will have competitions in men's and ladies singles, men's and ladies doubles and mixed doubles. The battles will be shown on television every Tuesday and Thursday on Solar Sports from 6-8 p.m. with hosts Anthony Suntay, Annie Yusuico and badminton Olympian Weena Lim. Replays are on Wednesday and Friday at 3 p.m. Playing in today's opening matches are Andrea Go against Irene Chiu (ladies singles), Lloyd Escoses against Arolas Amahit Jr. (men's singles), Janina Paredes and Marga Tan against Michelle Guerrero and Melody Villaceran (ladies doubles), Naresh Ramnani and Martin Fernandez against Carlo Ventosa and Jaime Llanes (men's doubles), and Brandon Chan and Elaine Lao against Martin Araneta and Amanda Carpo (mixed doubles).

Calauag summer marathon slated

A TOTAL cash pot of P42,000, including the winner's prize of P15,000, are at stake in the 4th National Open 30-km Summer Marathon set May 21 in Calauag, Quezon. Members of the national training pool are expected at the starting line of the race won last year by veteran Rey Antoque and organized by the Calauag Track and Field Association. The rest of the top 10 finishers also stand to earn cash prizes and trophies with the second placer pocketing P10,000 and the third placer P5,000. Fourth to 10th placers get P1,000 each. Apart from the Top 10 purses, P5,000 will go to the race's "Usa ng Kabundukan" winner. The organizers are offering free overnight board and lodging for runners who do not come from Quezon province. For inquiries, call 0918-8303389 or 0916-8391619.

Derby big guns joining Big Dome meet

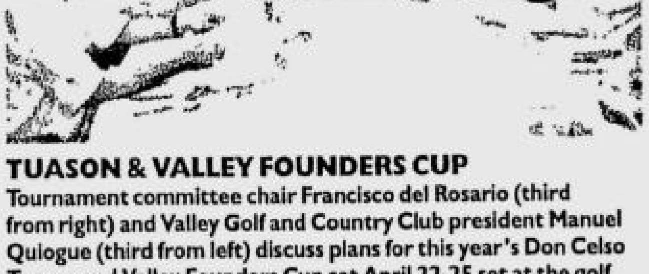
MORE than 50 exciting fights are on tap when the National Cockers Association 7-Cock Derby resumes at 5 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum. Hosted by NCA president and Rizal Gov. Ito Yñares as well as businessman sportsman Gerry Ramos of Las Piñas, the list of entries include Jorge "Nene" Araneta, Eddie Araneta, the Firefly Group, Rep. Rudy Albano, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Jet and Joel Fernando, Madlambayan Brothers, Louie Cua, Boy Royo, Pol Estrellado, Frank Berin, Jun Jingco, Rudy Salud, Lito Orillaza, Gerry Escalona, Rep. Claude Bautista, hotelier Biboy Enriquez, Ucap president Raymond Velayo, newspaper publisher Butch Macasaet and former ambassador Danding Cojuangco. Two entries won the NCA-7 Cock Derby held last March 16-18. These were PEBR Firefly of Boy Royo and Boy de Roca and Silver Buck of Bicol cocker Alex Tang. Meanwhile, another 7-cock derby sizzles on April 13 and 15 with Tony Tan, Tony Marfori and Pepito Ngo as co-hosts. For inquiries, call 911-3101 or 911-2928.

Roligon 6-cocker bets accepted today

OFFICIAL entries to the Slasher Cup ng Masa 6-Cock Derby must be submitted from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. today at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. The four-day hackfights, slated March 24, 26, 29 and 31 and hosted by 2003 World Slasher Cup champion Rey Briones, is backed by Roligon owner Rolly Ligon. A guaranteed cash prize of P1.5 million is at stake for an entry fee of P8,800. The minimum bet is P3,300. The elimination round will be held on Wednesday and Friday, with the semifinals set on March 29 and the finals on March 31. Ace fighters from Masbate, Bicol, Palawan, Negros Occidental, Iloilo, Davao, Cebu, Zambales, Pangasinan, Ilocos, Pampanga, Laguna, Rizal, Batangas and Cavite are vying in the derby. For inquiries, call 833-2275, 833-1638, 852-9774 and 852-9812 (look for Aubrey, Shirley or Tiling).

Burlington basketball clinic moved

DUE to unavoidable circumstances, the Burlington Junior Basketball Clinic scheduled on Saturday, March 27, has been moved to Wednesday, March 24, at the Araneta Coliseum.



TUASON & VALLEY FOUNDERS CUP
Tournament committee chair Francisco del Rosario (third from right) and Valley Golf and Country Club president Manuel Quiogue (third from left) discuss plans for this year's Don Celso Tuason and Valley Founders Cup set April 22-25 set at the golf course in Antipolo City. With them are (from left) Mar Baguno, Emil Ramos, Nick de Mesa and Bobby Roxas.

PSC releases ₱11M to NSAs, as promised

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FINALLY, some good news for the national sports associations.

The Philippine Sports Commission yesterday approved the release of P11 million to at least 10 NSAs with urgent financial obligations, including those dating back to the Busan Asian Games.

PSC chair Eric Buhain yesterday said more funds will flow in the coming months as the agency gears for what he termed as "all-out preparation" for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games here.

Two months ago, the NSAs complained about the delay of funds from the PSC with at least 11 of them going to the extent of petitioning Malacañang to intervene.

The petition, submitted by Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit, prompted Buhain to call NSA heads and Dayrit to a dialog last month at the Sheraton Hotel.

"We promised them (NSAs) to expect (money) by March," said Buhain. "And we will not break our promise. From now on, every month that goes by after March will be a better month."

He said the windfall will continue until all obligations and receivables have been settled by the agency.

The PSC, however, didn't say which among the NSAs were given the money, although PSC executive director Ed Mateo said they gave priority to those with "contractual obligations."

Southeast Asian youth baseball meet tomorrow

BALLCLUBS from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines and Australia plunge into action tomorrow at the start of the Southeast Asian Youth Baseball-Softball Tournament at the Alabang Country Club.

The five-day event, dubbed "Kabataan Series," features competitions in different age groups, including the Minors Boys (11-12 years), Majors Boys (13-14), Seniors Boys (19-under), and Seniors Girls (19-under).

At the vanguard of the local challenge are the Manila ATC Mariners (Boys 11-12), Manila Bellevue Sharks (Boys 13-14), Manila Smart Eagles (Boys 19-under), and the Manila Outback Marlins (Girls 19-under).

The Philippines is hosting the tournament for the first time and has ensured the safety of participating teams, said SEAYBST marketing director Duque Zuluaga. Perth, Australia hosted the event in the last three years.

The event, along with the Philippine National Series set this year in Tanauan City, Batangas, serves as the local teams' preparation for the 2004 Little League World Series in the United States.

Admission is free. Shuttle services are available for the public. *Trina Ibarle*

PBA Media golf tees off at Wack Wack

THE 2004 PBA Media Golf Series, featuring golfing officers of the country's premier cage league versus their counterparts from the sports media, kicks off with the opening leg at Wack Wack's west course tomorrow.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala will hit the ceremonial drive while league board chair Buddy Encarnado will be the guest of honor during the awarding ceremonies.

Eala banners the PBA cast that includes board representatives Bobby Kanapi of Shell, Wilfred Uytengsu of Alaska, Ely Capacio of San Miguel, Ricky Vargas and Al Panlilio of Talk 'N Text and Manny Mendoza of Red Bull Barako, and team managers Hector Calma of Coca-Cola and Chito Loyzaga of San Miguel Beer.

Mandapat-Lee tops John Hay Invitationals

BONG Mandapat and guest partner Charlie Lee proved to be the steadiest team as they posted an easy victory in the recent second Camp John Hay Invitational golf tournament in Baguio City.

The Mandapat-Lee pair netted a 28-under 110 to rule Group I by six strokes over the fancied pair of Mars Garcia-Bong Brobio. Bill Lawrence and Richard Joson were another stroke back in third place.

The tandems of Benito Ang-Lorenzo Teng (Group II) and Eugenio Ambrocio-Dodi Morfe (Group III) emerged as the other winners in the member-guest event which used the best-ball format in the first round and scramble the next day.

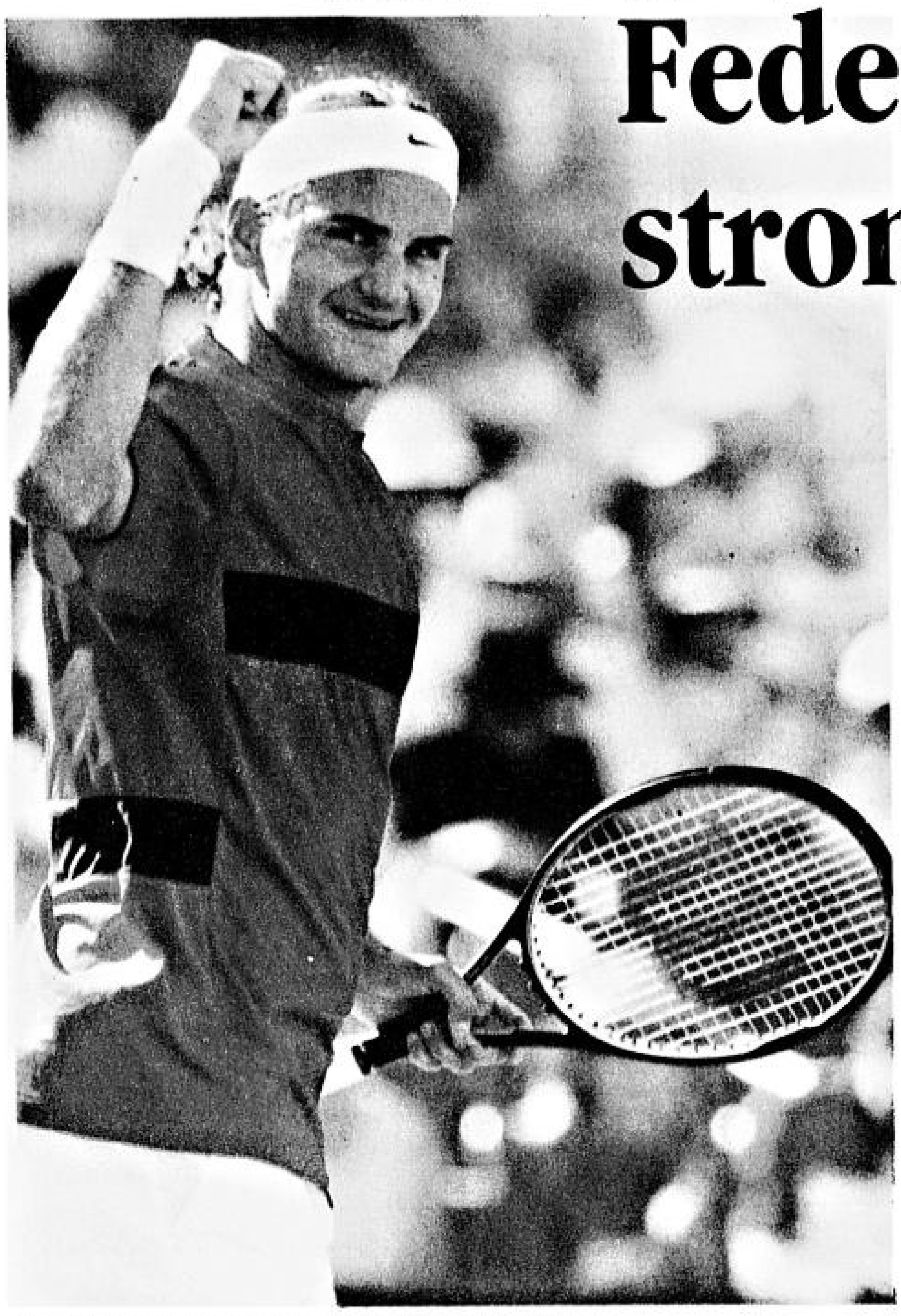
Sponsors included Camp John Hay Development Company, Camp John Hay Golf Club, Camp John Hay Manor Hotel, Le Chef at the Manor, Kork Inc. F&B Systems & Services, Filling Station: Hotshots & Figaro Coffee, Federal Management and Maintenance Inc. and Golforce.

Camp John Hay board chair Robert John Sobrepeña, sports and games committee chair Freddie Mendoza and club manager Bong Vilchez handed out the trophies.

Ang and Teng conspired for 119 to beat the teams of Toti Reyes-Roger Cua and Frank Ratcliffe-Jeff Young by four, the same margin posted by the pair of Ambrocio-Morfe in winning over Beth Loy and Louie Siapno. Inoc Laranang-Rick Famorca was in third place at 124.

Hole-in-one awards were given to Ruben Pinlac and Ramon Suzara who both aced the 13th on March 19 and 20, respectively.

Federer, Hardenne too strong for Pacific rivals



FEDERER punches the air after beating Henman, 6-3, 6-3. AFP

INDIAN WELLS, California—Roger Federer of Switzerland and Justine Henin-Hardenne of Belgium played up to their No. 1 rankings, both winning Pacific Life Open titles in straight sets.

Federer beat nemesis Tim Henman of Britain for just the second time in eight meetings, 6-3, 6-3 Sunday, to take his third title of the year. Federer's only loss in his last 28 matches was to Henman earlier this year in Rotterdam.

Henin-Hardenne used a dazzling mix of shots to beat former No. 1 Lindsay Davenport of the United States, 6-1, 6-4, in the women's final.

Federer was virtually error-free against Henman, with the Swiss star making only five unforced errors to 19 by his English opponent.

The reigning Wimbledon and Australian Open champion, Federer had his service broken just twice in six matches at Indian Wells. Henman never even had a break point against him in the final.

"I feel like there are not many guys left who really have an edge on me," Federer said.

Henman was in the title match for the second time in three years; Lleyton Hewitt of Australia beat him, 6-1, 6-2, two years ago.

Henin-Hardenne's victory, which came in 40-degree C (104-degree F) heat, gave the 21-year-old Belgian her fourth title of the year, and she's off to a 22-1 start.

Her last loss in one of the WTA Tour's major Tier 1 tournaments was 25 matches and almost a year ago, to American Chandra Rubin at Key Biscayne, Florida.

Davenport lost for only the second time in 17 matches this year. *AP*

HENIN-HARDENNE celebrates win over Davenport. REUTERS

Campbell rallies, wins Bay Hill tilt by 6 shots

ORLANDO, Florida—Chad Campbell rallied from a four-shot deficit by closing with a flawless 6-under 66 Sunday to surge past mistake-prone Stuart Appleby and win the Bay Hill Invitational.

It was the best comeback at Bay Hill in 20 years, and the turnaround was stunning on both ends.

Campbell, 29, was four shots behind with 12 holes to play. By the time he walked onto the 18th green, he could have seven-putted and still won the tournament.

Appleby lost the lead for good with a three-putt on the 14th hole, and his finish was ugly. He missed a 3-foot par putt on the 17th, then drove into a hedge and hit into the water on the 18th, lucky to escape with a double bogey for a 4-over 76 to finish six shots behind.

"I never counted him out, even though Appleby had a pretty good lead on him," Arnold Palmer said.

Campbell won for the second time with the kind of golf that shows why he's one of the rising stars in golf. He finished at 18-under 270 and earned $900,000.

Without Tiger Woods going for a record fifth straight victory at Bay Hill—he shot 73 and tied for 46th, his worst finish in five years—the tournament was missing some of the buzz.

That changed with Campbell's great charge, and the theatrics of John Daly.

Daly was poised to finish third and secure a spot in the Masters until a wild ride on the final four holes—double bogey, eagle, bogey, triple bogey—that knocked him down into a tie for 10th.

"There's not many guys who could make five doubles and a triple and still finish in the top 10," Daly said. *AP*

CAMPBELL gets a kiss from wife Amy. AP

Mavs upend Nets; Pistons notch No. 8

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey—Steve Nash had 15 points and a season-high 16 assists and the Dallas Mavericks came up with two big defensive plays in the final 18.8 seconds to post a 101-98 win over the undermanned New Jersey Nets.

Dirk Nowitzki blocked a shot underneath the basket by Nets center Jason Collins, seconds after hitting a fadeaway jumper that gave the Mavericks a 99-98 lead with 26.8 seconds left Sunday.

Nash, who had a big turnover in the final minute to keep the Nets' hopes afloat of an upset without Jason Kidd and Kenyon Martin, made the second defensive play with 5.4 seconds to go.

Nowitzki finished with 21 points and Antawn Jamison had 20 for the Mavericks.

In Cleveland, Chauncey Billups had 18 points and the Detroit Pistons smothered Cleveland in the first half, beating the Cavaliers, 96-76, to extend their winning streak to eight.

In Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal had 31 points, an NBA season-high 26 rebounds and seven blocked shots, and Kobe Bryant made the winning jumper with 25.1 seconds left in overtime to lead the Los Angeles Lakers over Milwaukee, 104-103.

Complete results: Dallas 101, New Jersey 98; Golden State 96, LA Clippers 85; Minnesota 98, Denver 77; Miami 101, Washington 81; Detroit 96, Cleveland 76; Toronto 121, New Orleans 120 (OT); Sacramento 100, Houston 95; Seattle 84, Orlando 67; LA Lakers 104, Milwaukee 103 (OT). *AP*

GEORGIA Tech's Jarrett Jack hangs onto the rim as he slam-dunks late in the game in the Yellow Jackets' 57-54 win over Boston College. AP

UAB shocks Kentucky

NEW YORK—Mo Finley hit a 17-foot jumper with 12.2 seconds remaining as ninth-seeded University of Alabama-Birmingham shocked top-seeded Kentucky, 76-75, in the second round of the St. Louis Regional at the NCAA Tournament Sunday.

Kentucky was the number one seeded team in the tournament but was stunned by UAB, which advanced to the round of 16 for the first time since 1982.

Exactly 23 years ago, UAB knocked Kentucky in the 1981 tournament in what was then another major upset.

Finley had 17 points to lead the winners, while Fitch also had 17 points for Kentucky.

In other NCAA tournament action, two other top seeded teams were eliminated as third seed North Carolina State lost to number six seed Vanderbilt, 75-73, in the Phoenix Region, while the Atlanta Region's number two seed, Mississippi State, was crushed, 89-74, by seventh-seeded Xavier. *Reuters*

Sorenstam picks up 49th career victory

SUPERSTITION Mountain, Arizona—Annika Sorenstam survived hot, windy conditions in the desert to win the Safeway International at 18-under 270 in her LPGA season debut.

The six-time player of the year from Sweden earned her 49th career tour victory with a four-stroke margin over Cristie Kerr.

Sorenstam punctuated her triumph by rolling in a 25-foot birdie putt on the par-5, 508-yard 18th.

Philippine bet Jennifer Rosales also struggled but her two-over-par 74 and 287 total was good enough to give her a share of 21st place. Hobbled by a wrist injury that forced her to withdraw from last week's season-opener, Rosales still managed to win $12,666 (about P700,000).

Fil-Am Dorothy Delasin was far down the standings, her 78-298 putting her in 63rd spot. She won $2,723.

Sorenstam shot a 2-under 70 on Sunday, mixing four birdies with two bogeys.

Michelle Wie struggled to a 4-over 77 to wind up 2 under for the tournament.

Still, the 14-year-old said she loved the experience and the crowd support. She had a long, loud ovation after saving par on the 18th. *AP*

SORENSTAM

Advice to Jennifer

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I CAN'T understand it. If Jennifer Rosales was hurting, why was she allowed to play?

"Her wrist is injured," Bong Lopez, Jennifer's swing coach, has been quoted as saying.

It was reported that during first round of play on Friday of the year's first LPGA event in Superstition Mountain, Arizona, Jennifer might have aggravated her injury after she had blasted out of one trap. According to Bong, Jennifer flung her blaster "after feeling something had snapped" after the shot. She then slumped on the edge of the bunker, wincing in pain. She continued to play after the pain had gone.

"She was playing so well that's why she elected to finish her round," Bong Lopez had reportedly said.

I'm sure Jennifer didn't waste time resuming play or she would have gotten a warning for slow play by tournament referees.

It strikes me as weird for Bong, if he were there at all, to have allowed Jennifer to proceed.

It was even weirder why Bong had allowed Jennifer to join the tournament. Jennifer ignored Bong's plea not to play?

I saw the bandage in Jennifer's right wrist. Her picture was splashed in the papers.

Although Jennifer finished the first round in a blaze with her 5-under-par 67, the joy was but short-lived. The following day, she ballooned to 74 for 141-9 shots off the leader, Annika Sorenstam (67-65=132).

Jennifer's second-round showing was a far cry from the performance of Michelle Wie, the 14-year-old Korean from Hawaii, who fired 67 to stay at 5-under 139.

The papers did not say if Jennifer's poor showing in the second round was the result of her hurting wrist. (As I was writing this, third round action was in progress.)

But I can imagine the hurting wrist came into play.

In big time sports like the NBA, a simple ankle sprain is treated with care. Every hurt there is considered big. Which should really be the case always.

One can't compromise the future. Big injuries start from small. Taking a minor injury for granted is the worst attitude in sports.

I do not even want to think about it but the way Jennifer has been treating her wrist injury, I'd say it smacked of unprofessionalism.

Professionals are always supposed to take care of themselves with utmost care. The future is now: You compromise your present situation and that could spell disastrous consequences. Before you know it, your career is gone.

How many athletes have lost their future while supposed to be in the peak of their careers, just because they ignored danger signals, or even doctors' advice?

I know some players who lost their future by gambling their careers by playing hurt.

In these times when competition is so keen, one should not take even a sore thumb or minor swelling in the knee for granted. Have that checked up immediately and next heed the doctor's advice without question. There are many opponents out there ready to pounce on you. With a career-threatening injury staring you squarely in the face, why compromise?

I repeat, every injury in sports is dangerous. In this life, there is no such animal as a minor injury. All injuries here are major—be it an itch caused by an ant bite or a scratch triggered by a romantic pinch from your dearest one.

So, to get back to Jennifer again.

I do hope that she realizes early enough the risks involved when she went on playing in Superstition Mountain despite suffering from a wrist injury. One tournament missed isn't big deal. Even two, three tournaments for that matter. There will be many more battles to be fought, many more battlefields to be won.

One battle does not make the war.

I'm not superstitious but Jennifer could be courting a bad omen with her stint in Superstition Mountain. Isn't it said never to go to a wake when you aren't feeling well?

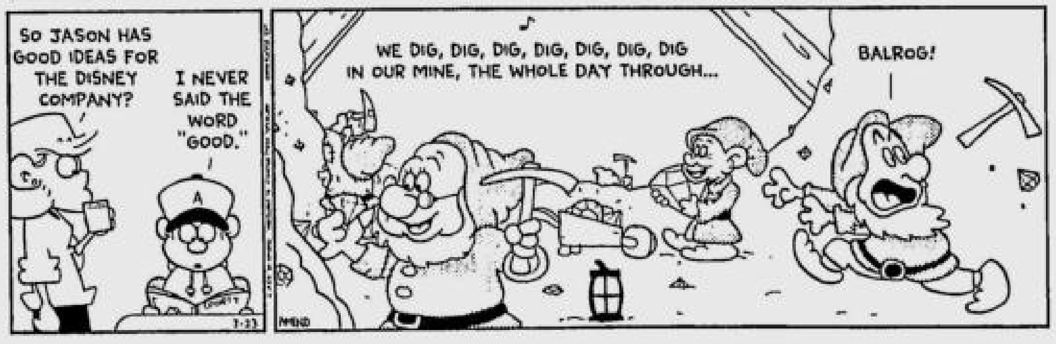
Wake up, Jennifer. The season has just begun.

***

FASTBREAK. Dream Cable's Channel 49 and Star Sports will both carry live all four days of the 68th US Masters on April 9-12. Some 96 players from around the world have been invited, including the world's Top 50 led by No. 1 Tiger Woods. Mike Weir, the first Canadian to win the Masters last year after beating Len Mattiace in the playoff, will be back. The left-hander will also be joined by the Top 10 money winners last year, amateur invitees and past champions to include four-time champion Arnold Palmer, who will play his 50th Masters this year. My dream of going back to the Masters after having covered it in 1991 has yet to come true. I'm not giving up, though. Maybe next year?

FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SO JASON HAS GOOD IDEAS FOR THE DISNEY COMPANY?
I NEVER SAID THE WORD "GOOD."
WE DIG, DIG, DIG, DIG, DIG, DIG, DIG IN OUR MINE, THE WHOLE DAY THROUGH...
BALROG!

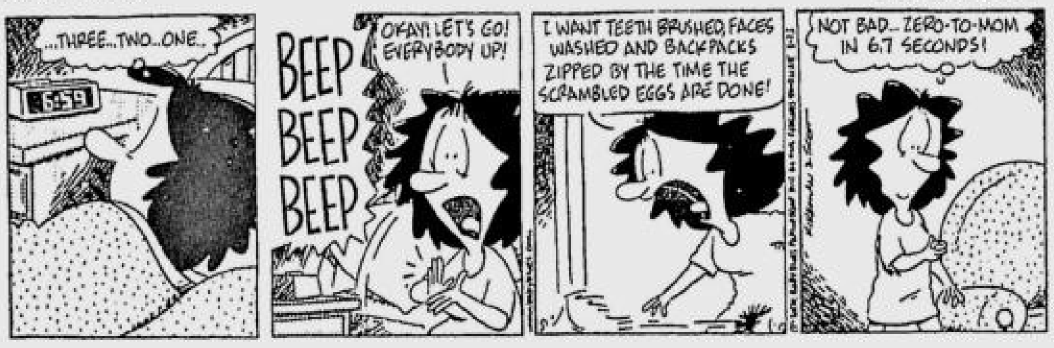
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG

OH, I FORGOT TO TELL YOU... BERNIE AND HELEN ARE BOTH ON A DIET.
THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!
STARTING TOMORROW, WE'RE GOING TO DO THE SAME THING!
NOW I REMEMBER WHY I FORGOT.

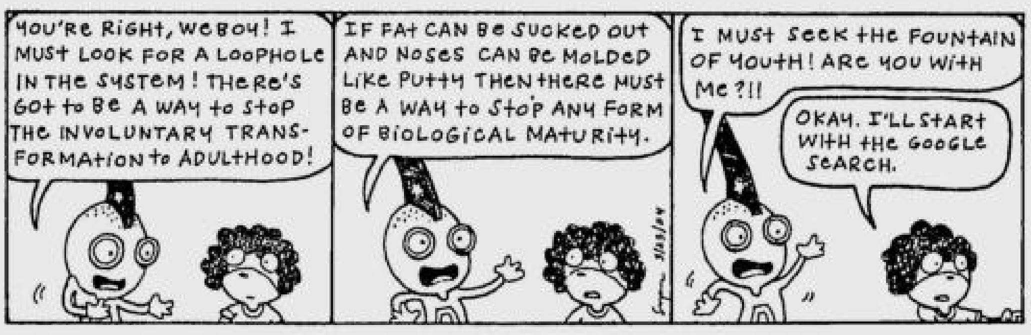
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


...THREE...TWO...ONE...
6:59
BEEP BEEP BEEP
OKAY! LET'S GO! EVERYBODY UP!
I WANT TEETH BRUSHED, FACES WASHED AND BACKPACKS ZIPPED BY THE TIME THE SCRAMBLED EGGS ARE DONE!
NOT BAD... ZERO-TO-MOM IN 6.7 SECONDS!

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


YOU'RE RIGHT, WEBOY! I MUST LOOK FOR A LOOPHOLE IN THE SYSTEM! THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO STOP THE INVOLUNTARY TRANSFORMATION TO ADULTHOOD!
IF FAT CAN BE SUCKED OUT AND NOSES CAN BE MOLDED LIKE PUTTY THEN THERE MUST BE A WAY TO STOP ANY FORM OF BIOLOGICAL MATURITY.
I MUST SEEK THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH! ARE YOU WITH ME?!!
OKAY. I'LL START WITH THE GOOGLE SEARCH.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are extremely versatile. You're talented and well-versed in many fields. You like to approach life scientifically and logically. Your friends admire your courage. (You are not easily daunted.) You like people of all walks of life, but you are particularly sympathetic to children. Exciting and significant changes await you this year.
Birthdate of: Keri Russell, actress; Roger Bannister, runner; Wernher Von Braun, scientist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a good day to shop. It is also an excellent day for business and commerce. Practically any kind of financial transaction will benefit or please you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You feel energized and emotional today. You want to put all of yourself into whatever you do. Be confident in what you attempt today, because others will be nicely cooperative with you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You definitely need to get some physical exercise. A strong energy is building up within you now. You have to give it an opportunity for release to prevent getting cranky.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Enjoy conversations with friends today, especially female friends. Since you're in the public eye more than usual, you might need the comforting reassurance of a heart-to-heart talk with someone.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You might feel so emotionally strong about something that you could call attention to yourself today. (Worst-case scenario: a public argument.) Think twice before you speak!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Try to learn something or upgrade your skills in order to promote your job ambitions. You have high expectations for yourself now. Give yourself the training you need to get where you want to go.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Sometimes, you don't defend yourself because you hate to contradict people. But you have to stand up for yourself. You need to define your own boundaries. Doing so is simply a healthy self-interest.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Be prepared to go more than halfway when dealing with others today. You have no choice, because the Moon opposes your sign now. (It's no big deal.)

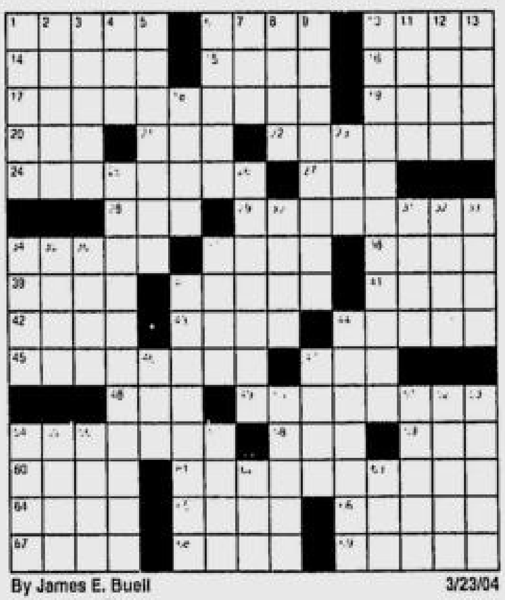
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Focus on tidying things at home and at work today. Pay attention to details. Let efficiency be your motto today!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Mild flirtations from out of the blue might catch you off-guard. They could be harmless, or they might blossom into new love. (Enjoy the admiration.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Purchases made for family members or for your home will please you today. Everything having to do with real estate and a family business is blessed.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a good day for negotiations, buying and selling, shopping and making deals. Ordinary day-to-day business flows smoothly. (Make hay while the sun shines!)

DAILY CROSSWORD



By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL

3/23/04

ACROSS
1 Family men
6 Peaceful
10 Heroic tale
14 Cognizant
15 Diva's song
16 Witty remark
17 Sumpter
19 Vases with bases
20 Just get by
21 __ Nol of Cambodia
22 Let go
24 Breathers
27 One of the Three Stooges
28 __ v. Wade
29 Utter nerve
34 Females
37 Trap enticement
38 __ Stanley Gardner
39 Lamenter's comment
40 Strait of __ Isle
41 Impoverished
42 Troubles
43 Captivated
44 Church leader
45 Legitimate target
47 Literary snippets
48 Comic squeal
49 Dawdle
54 Local branch
58 Luau wear
59 Homer Simpson's dad
60 Saintly glow
61 Impromptu gig
64 State positively
65 Dust Bowl migrant
66 Curly diacritical mark
67 Schoolbook
68 Three-__ salad
69 Eyelid woes

DOWN
1 Wall covering
2 Get up!
3 Walks the floor
4 Genesis craft
5 Eared seal
6 Queeg's ship
7 Upper limb
8 False witness
9 Alaskan sled dog: var.
10 Diamond tactic
11 Invisible emanation
12 Tonic mixers
13 Basilica section
18 Brief communication
23 Parking area
25 News write-up
26 Surgeon's knife
30 Handle of a sword
31 Goad
32 Sunburn soother
33 German gentleman
34 Homeless child
35 Stew pot
36 Timbuktu's land
37 Shaft of light
40 Mechanic's task
44 Joins up
46 Retrieve
47 On the less windy side
50 Mary Kate or Ashley
51 Half a 1969 Beau Bridges movie
52 Dwelling
53 Tierney and Autry
54 Talk casually
55 Possess
56 Answer-man Trebek
57 Fall cleanup tool
62 Farrow of "Rosemary's Baby"
63 Take a load off

Monday's Puzzle Solved

A	E	S	O	P	■	M	I	A	T	A	■	T	R	U
B	R	I	A	R	■	A	N	T	O	N	■	H	E	P
C	A	S	S	I	U	S	C	L	A	Y	■	E	V	E
■	■	■	I	N	N	■	H	A	S	T	■	G	U	N
O	L	M	S	T	E	D	■	S	T	I	R	R	E	D
P	H	O	■	S	A	R	D	■	S	M	E	E	■	■
C	A	H	N	■	S	A	R	A	■	E	N	A	C	T
I	S	A	O	■	E	W	I	N	G	■	A	T	R	A
T	A	M	P	A	■	S	E	G	O	■	L	E	A	P
■	■	M	A	L	I	■	D	U	S	T	■	S	T	E
S	P	A	R	I	N	G	■	S	P	A	T	T	E	R
L	O	D	■	A	S	E	A	■	E	X	O	■	■	■
A	S	A	■	S	O	N	N	Y	L	I	S	T	O	N
B	E	L	■	E	L	E	N	I	■	E	C	O	L	E
S	D	I	■	S	E	T	O	N	■	D	A	R	E	D

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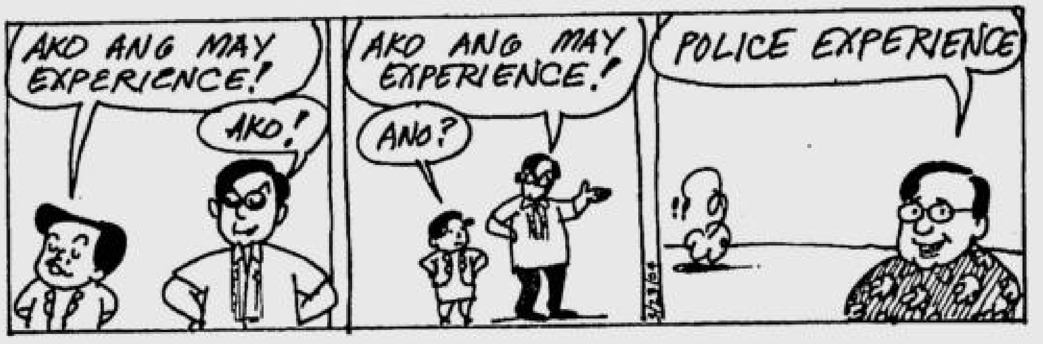
3/23/04

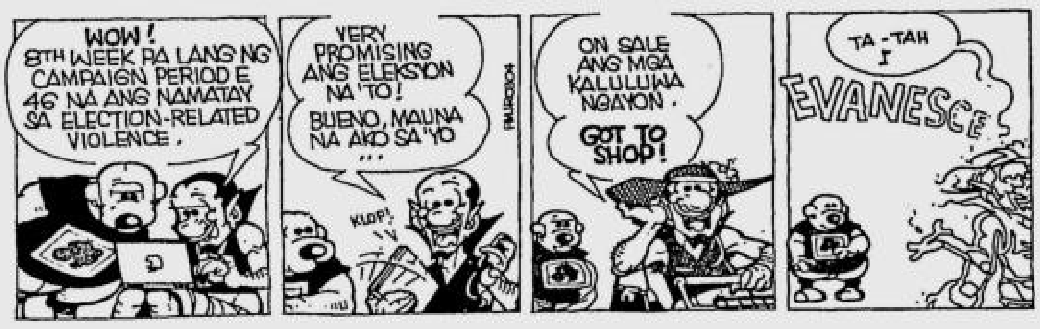
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AKO ANG MAY EXPERIENCE!
AKO!
AKO ANG MAY EXPERIENCE!
ANO?
POLICE EXPERIENCE

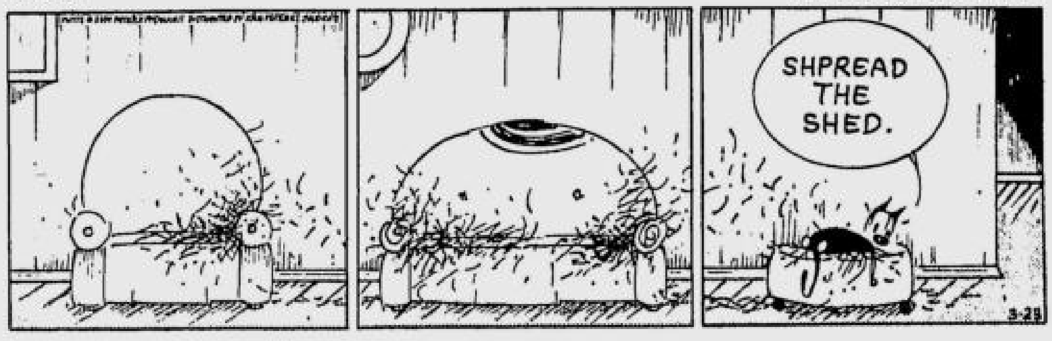
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


WOW! 8TH WEEK PA LANG NG CAMPAIGN PERIOD E 46 NA ANG NAMATAY SA ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE.
VERY PROMISING ANG ELEKSYON NA 'TO!
BUENO, MAUNA NA AKO SA'YO...
KLOP!
ON SALE ANG MGA KALULUWA NGAYON.
GOT TO SHOP!
TA-TAH I
EVANESCE

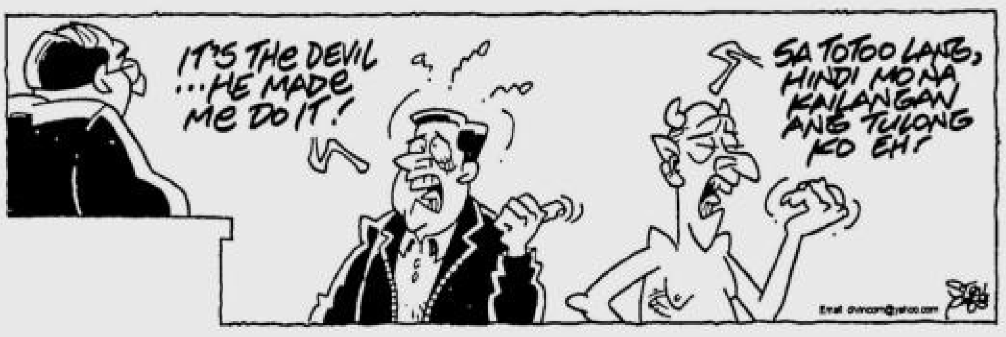
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHPREAD THE SHED.

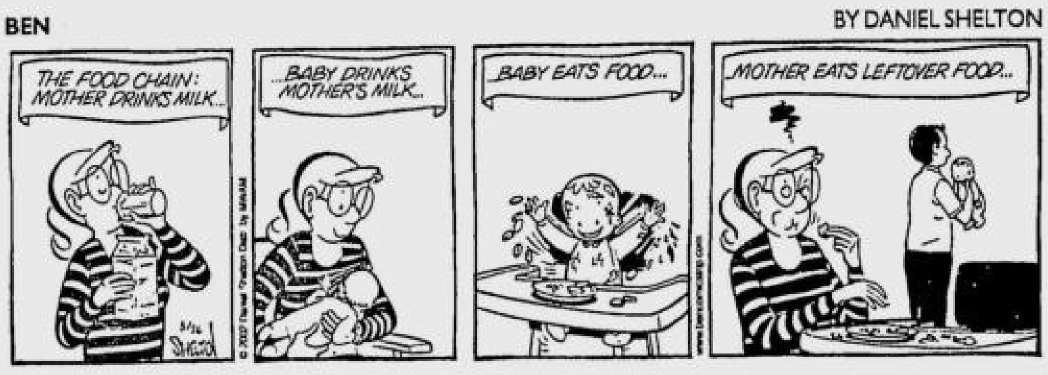
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


IT'S THE DEVIL ...HE MADE ME DO IT!
SA TOTOO LANG, HINDI MO NA KAILANGAN ANG TULONG KO EH!

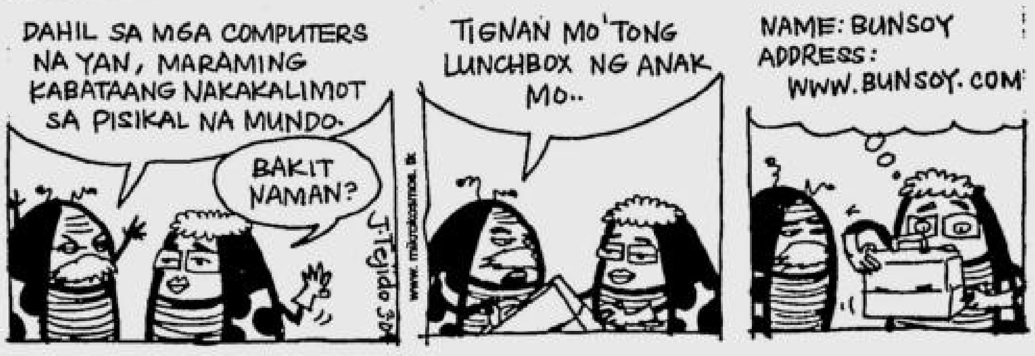
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


THE FOOD CHAIN: MOTHER DRINKS MILK...
...BABY DRINKS MOTHER'S MILK...
...BABY EATS FOOD...
...MOTHER EATS LEFTOVER FOOD...

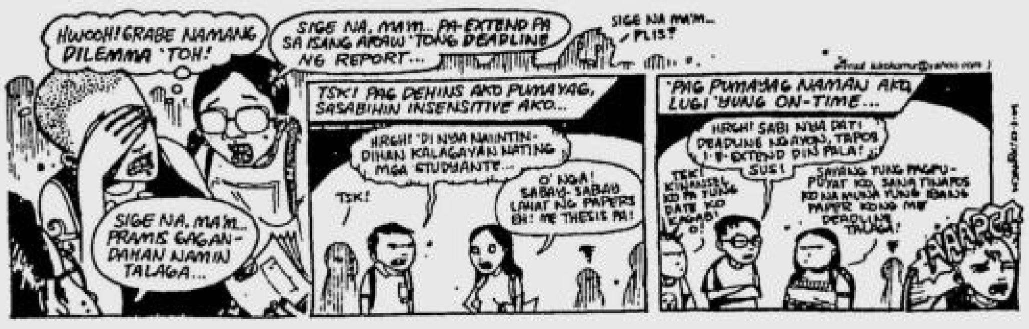
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DAHIL SA MGA COMPUTERS NA YAN, MARAMING KABATAANG NAKAKALIMOT SA PISIKAL NA MUNDO.
BAKIT NAMAN?
TIGNAN MO 'TONG LUNCHBOX NG ANAK MO..
NAME: BUNSOY ADDRESS: WWW.BUNSOY.COM

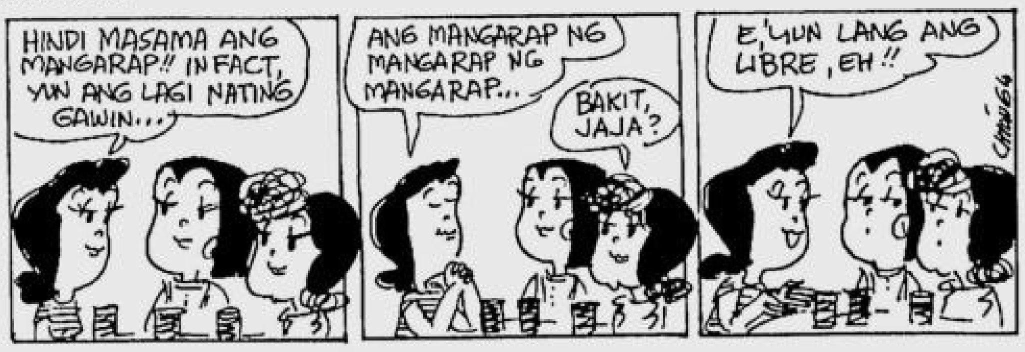
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


HWOOH! GRABE NAMANG DILEMMA 'TOH!
SIGE NA, MA'M... PA-EXTEND PA SA ISANG ARAW 'TONG DEADLINE NG REPORT...
SIGE NA MA'M... PLIS?
SIGE NA, MA'M... PRAMIS GAGANDAHAN NAMIN TALAGA...
TSK! PAG DEHINS AKO PUMAYAG, SASABIHIN INSENSITIVE AKO...
HRGH! 'DI NIYA NAIINTINDIHAN KALAGAYAN NATING MGA ESTUDYANTE...
TSK!
O NGA! SABAY-SABAY LAHAT NG PAPERS EH! ME THESIS PA!
'PAG PUMAYAG NAMAN AKO, LUGI 'YUNG ON-TIME...
HRGH! SABI NIYA DATI DEADLINE NGAYON, TAPOS I-E-EXTEND DIN PALA!
SUS!
TSK!
SAYANG 'YUNG PAGPUPUYAT KO, SANA TINAPOS KO NA MUNA 'YUNG IBANG PAPER KONG ME DEADLINE TALAGA!

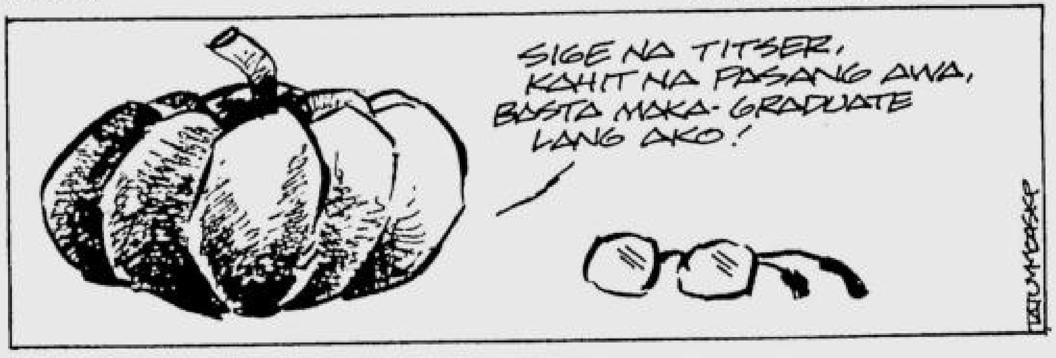
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HINDI MASAMA ANG MANGARAP!! IN FACT, YUN ANG LAGI NATING GAWIN...
ANG MANGARAP NG MANGARAP NG MANGARAP...
BAKIT, JAJA?
E, 'YUN LANG ANG LIBRE, EH!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SIGE NA TITSER, KAHIT NA PASANG AWA, BASTA MAKA-GRADUATE LANG AKO!

Win 'Lilo & Stitch' trading cards

SHOW STOPPER

"LILO & Stitch: The Series" on Disney Channel has the mischievous, trouble-making alien from the blockbuster movie and his 625 alien cuzzins showing off their rampant, wily ways.

This March, viewers will have the chance to get their hands on 35 of these characters through a set of limited-edition Disney's 'Lilo & Stitch' trading cards.

Kids must tune in to Disney Channel and watch "Lilo & Stitch: The Series" every Monday and Wednesday, from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., the whole month of March.

Three changing images in the front and passwords at the back of the cards entitle kids to win amazing prizes. Aside from being a collectors' item, the card, with its vital passwords, allows kids to access cool "Lilo & Stitch" online games from the "Lilo & Stitch" mini-game site on the Disney Channel website, www.disneychannel-asia.com.

Every week for five weeks, a new set of cards will be made available, and each weekly card set gives access to a different online game.

The top 25 scorers at the end of the five-week period will win a full set of "Lilo & Stitch" trading cards.

In addition, the overall top 10 scorers across the region will win a "Lilo & Stitch" Electronic Computer Game.

Araneta Center ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX

Ali 3	HIDALGO
Ali 4	50 FIRST DATES
Ali 5	TORQUE
Ali 6	THE CURSE
Ali 7	OTSO OTSO

NEW FIESTA CARNIVAL

Open Daily 4 PM to 10 PM

ARANETA COLISEUM

MAR 23	NCA7-COCK DERBY
MAR 24	PBA: GINEBRA VS. STA. LUCIA
MAR 25	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 27	CRAZY RIGHT NOW WITH VANESS WU
MAR 28	PBA: SHELL VS. GINEBRA
MAR 31	PBA: SAN MIGUEL VS. ALASKA
APR 2	ENRIQUE IGLESIAS -7 ASIA WORLD TOUR
APR 4	PBA: GINEBRA VS. TALK 'N' TEXT
APR 8	OLPH RETREAT (7AM)/ SHALOM (1PM)

For tickets, call TicketNet at 911-5555

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BALAT SIBUYAS / AMBISYOSA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	OTSO OTSO
B	PEEP SHOW
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
CINEMA-3	DRAGON VS NINJA
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	CARMEN
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	KUYA
CINEMA-6	U-BELT
CINEMA-7	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-8	ANNIE B
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HIDALGO
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
CINEMA-12	LOVE ACTUALLY
CINEMA-14	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-15	GRUDGE 2

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	RUNAWAY JURY
CINEMA-1	ANNIE B
CINEMA-2	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-4	TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

For inquiries, call:
687-6963 • 687-6972

RESERVED SEATING

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
12:30, 3:05, 5:40
8:15, 10:50
R-13

2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
11:00, 1:10, 3:20
5:30, 7:40, 9:50
GP

3 50 FIRST DATES
11:35, 1:50, 4:05
6:20, 8:35, 10:50
R-18

4 OTSO-OTSO
12:20, 2:40, 5:00
7:20, 9:40
PG-13

THEATRE MALL GREENHILLS

NOW SHOWING

DOLBY DIGITAL

CINEMA 1 HIDALGO
11:00, 1:40,
4:20, 7:00, 9:40
PG-13

CINEMA 2 50 FIRST DATES
11:00, 1:10, 3:20
5:30, 7:40, 10:00
PG-13

Special screening of
PASSION OF THE CHRIST on Holy Thursday.
Advance ticket purchase for PASSION OF THE CHRIST is also available 4-722 4496
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

MUSIC MUSEUM
MARCH 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 "MENOPAUSE THE MUSICAL" 8:00 PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

NOW SHOWING
MTRCB ▸ R-13 | STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP.
#1 MOVIE IN AMERICA
Hindi ka na magigising sa bangungot na 'to!
If you have the power to resurrect your loved one... would you do it?
ASHTON KUTCHER AMY SMART
The Butterfly Effect
A TERRIFYING JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINAL DESTINATION 2

2ND WEEK
MTRCB ▸ R-18 | Strictly for adults. No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted
THE LAST HORROR MOVIE YOU WILL EVER SEE!
THERE IS A MOVIE.
IF YOU VIEW IT.
YOU DIE.
THE CURSE
More terrifying than "THE RING."
JESSICA NAPIER SIMON BOSSELL MOLLY RINGWALD and KYLIE MINOGUE

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD

CALL-A-MOVIE FOR ALL BRANCHES 635-5555
Visit us: www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

TOP MOVIE THEATER

Annual National Consumer's Quality Award 2003
Family Consumers Choice Award 2003

NOW SHOWING

GALLERIA

632-9115 to 16 / 687-0593

CINEMA 1 THX HIDALGO 12:40, 3:15, 5:50, 8:25, 10:30

2 THE GRUDGE 2 12:20, 2:25, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30
3 BUTTERFLY EFFECT 11:05, 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:30
4 OTSO-OTSO 10:35, 12:50, 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9.50
5 50 FIRST DATES 10.25, 12:40, 2:55, 5:10, 7:25, 9:40
6 TORQUE 10:50, 1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, 9:45
7 THE CURSE 10:40, 12.40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:40, 10:30
8 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 12:20, 2:25, 4:30, 6:35, 8:40, 10:30
9 LOVE ACTUALLY 10:20, 1:10, 4:00, 6:50, 9:40
10 SORUM 11:05, 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:30

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P80 for one level cinemas
Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA

526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1 50 FIRST DATES 10:15, 12:30, 2:45, 5:00, 7:15, 9:40
2 THE GRUDGE 2 11:55, 2.00, 4:05, 6:10, 8.15, 10:00
3 HIDALGO 11:00, 1:40, 4:20, 7 00, 9:40
4 THE CURSE 11.40, 1.25, 3.10, 4.55, 6.40, 8.25, 10;00
5 LOVE ACTUALLY 11:00, 1:40, 4:20, 7.00, 9:40
6 BUTTERFLY EFFECT 11:35, 2 05, 4:35, 7.05, 9.40
7 OTSO-OTSO 10.15, 12 30, 2:45, 5.00, 7.15, 9:40

Big R Supercenter METRO EAST

682-8193/99 / 682-8280

1 THE CURSE 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
2 50 FIRST DATES 11:50, 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10
3 LOVE ACTUALLY 12:40, 3:20, 6:00, 9:00
4 HIDALGO 12.00, 3.00, 6.00, 9:00
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 10.50, 12 50, 2.50, 4.50, 6:50, 9:00
6 THE GRUDGE 2 10:40, 12 40, 2.40, 4 40, 6 40, 8:40, 10.30
7 BUTTERFLY EFFECT 10.50, 1:25, 4 00, 6:35, 9 10
8 OTSO-OTSO 11:00, 1.30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW

935-3229 / 31

1 THE GRUDGE 2 11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
2 OTSO-OTSO 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30
3 BUTTERFLY EFFECT 11.20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8 30
4 THE CURSE 11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4 55, 6:45, 8.35
5 HIDALGO 12.05, 2:50, 5:35, 8:30
6 TORQUE 10:25, 12:15, 2:05, 3:55, 5:45, 7:35, 9.00
7 50 FIRST DATES 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8.30, 10.05
8 SORUM 11:35, 1:40, 3.45, 5.50, 8.00

Citisquare MALABON

288-0985/2575

1 HIDALGO
2 OTSO-OTSO
3 50 FIRST DATES
4 CARMEN

big Supercenter CAINTA

240-4661

1 50 FIRST DATES
2 OTSO-OTSO
3 MEMENTO MORI
4 HIDALGO

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA

Laguna (049)837-0907

1 DRAGON VS. NINJA
2 OTSO-OTSO
3 CARMEN
4 LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
5 50 FIRST DATES

Big R Supercenter LIPA

757-3604 / 312-5870

1 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
2 OTSO-OTSO
3 DUPLEX
4 LOVE ACTUALLY
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS

852-2125

1 LANGIT MO KALIGAYAHAN KO
2 WATER DEMON
3 TORQUE
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
5 OTSO-OTSO

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS

San Fernando Pampanga
875-1927 / 961-5270

1 CARMEN
2 DRAGON VS. NINJA
3 OTSO-OTSO
4 MAGIC KITCHEN
5 TORQUE
6 HIDALGO

IMUS

471-8188 / 875-5858

1 HIDALGO
2 50 FIRST DATES
3 THE CURSE
4 BUTTERFLY EFFECT
5 OTSO-OTSO
6 THE GRUDGE 2

BACOLOD

441-0458/59

1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
2 21 GRAMS
3 OTSO-OTSO
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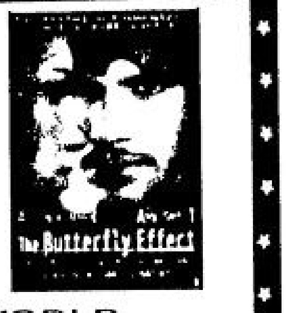

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The naked truth

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

AN ABS-CBN insider told me that my item about the disgruntled staff of the network had caused quite a stir. I might have rocked the boat, but I hope it does not sink. So the network's bigwigs better come to their senses.

My source said that the P3,000-P4,000 salary that the segment producers are paid for every episode they work on is not commensurate to their workload.

Day in and day out, they shoot, coordinate, take care of logistics and edit. Tax is deducted from their talent fee so their net pay boils down to about P3,600 per show, which has been the rate since 1997. That's approximately equivalent to the pay a call center employee receives. The irony is they don't get outside employment to help finish the backlog so the poor segment producers are obliged to absorb more work even with their low salaries.

It's the same thing for writers, according to my source. They don't hire new people so the daily grind is pretty difficult. If you enter any production room, you will see the people working there are dazed like zombies because they are so overworked and have no choice but to handle all the workload.

Proof of the general malaise prevailing among the ABS-CBN staff is the poor attendance during the "Wagi" party that the network threw at the QC sports club recently.

As one segment producer put it, "What's the point of attending the party? We don't feel like we're really *kapamilya* anyway. It's all for show!"

Being a TV host myself, I know how taxing the job of segment producers and writers are. They are the unsung heroes of every show. If ABS-CBN can afford to pay their stars hundreds of thousands of pesos (millions even) they should also give due compensation to their production staff.

After all, even if you got an award-winning actor, there would be no show if not for the combined efforts of the staff.

Belo's world

As I always tell my friends, when all else fails, vanity prevails! That's why when I'm feeling out of sorts, I pamper myself at Dr. Vicki Belo's clinic.

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Tears . . .

From page A25

said in the video. "She should lessen her jealousy."

Unlike most wedding receptions where the newlyweds go from table to table to have pictures taken with their guests, Matet and Mickey had their guests come to their table for the customary photo-ops.

When the hosts, Smokey Manaloto and Tetchie Molinilla of D'Gratte Events, the wedding's coordinator, asked the couple's parents to give advice to their children, Nora went to Matet and Mickey to whisper something.

"She said we shouldn't fight," Matet later revealed.

Matet declared her utmost gratitude to Mickey's family, who welcomed her with open arms. The Estradas gave their full support to the newlyweds.

Fans' day

"We love whoever our son loves," Mickey's mom, Lourdes, told INQUIRER Entertainment. "We welcome her with open arms."

Laughing, the couple said that they didn't need a honeymoon, although they plan to go to Boracay next month. When the baby comes six months from now and it's a boy, Matet and Mickey will name him Juan Miguel.

But Matet's church wedding was not as private and solemn as she had wanted it to be. The fans waiting outside the church, especially for Nora, turned the event into a fans day. Some even peeked into her Starex to get a glimpse of the actress.

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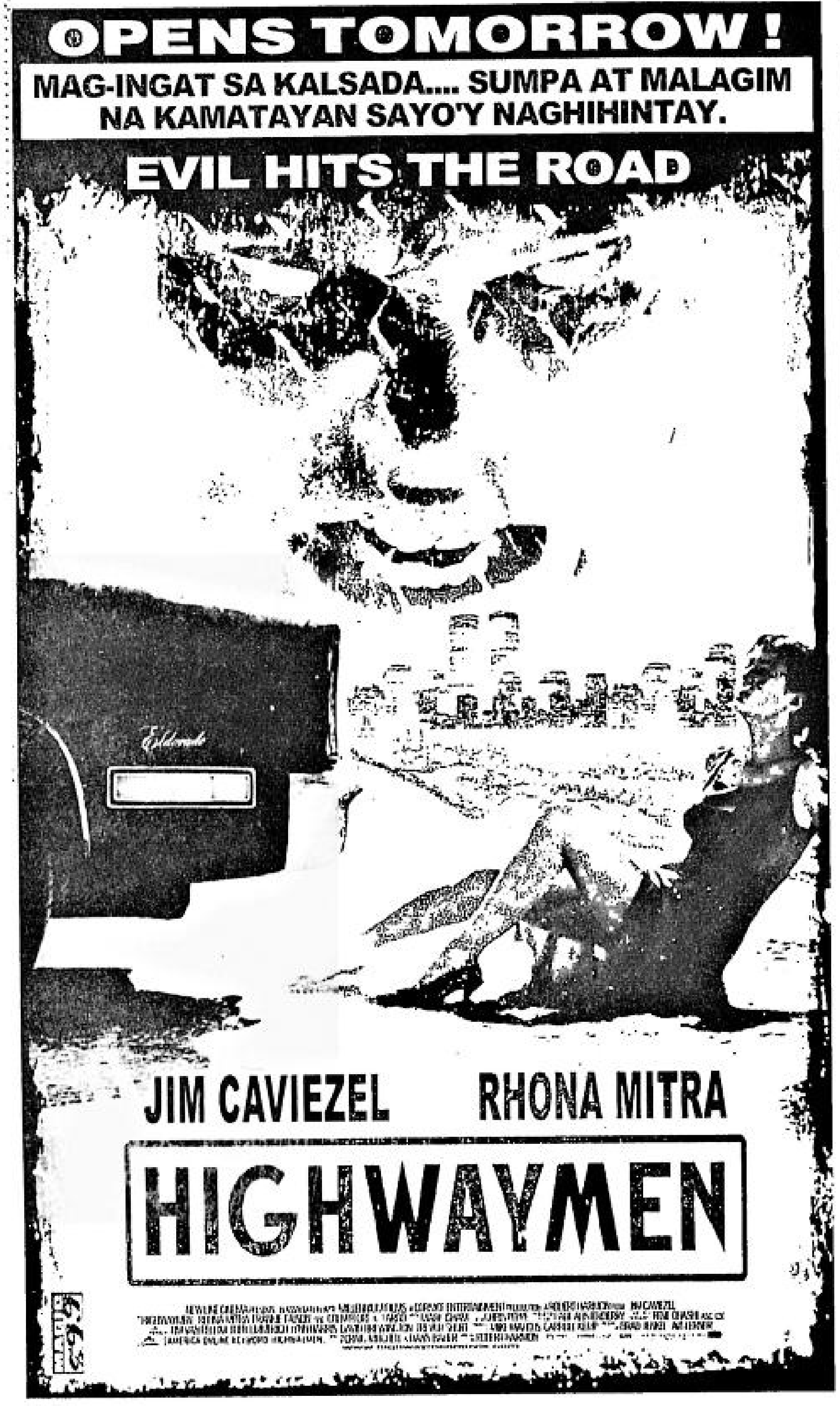

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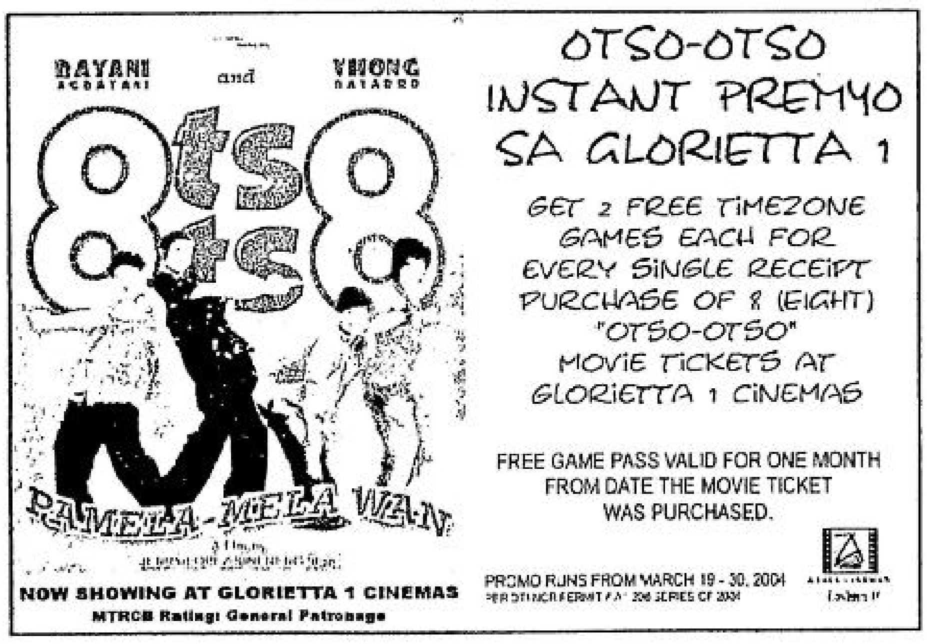

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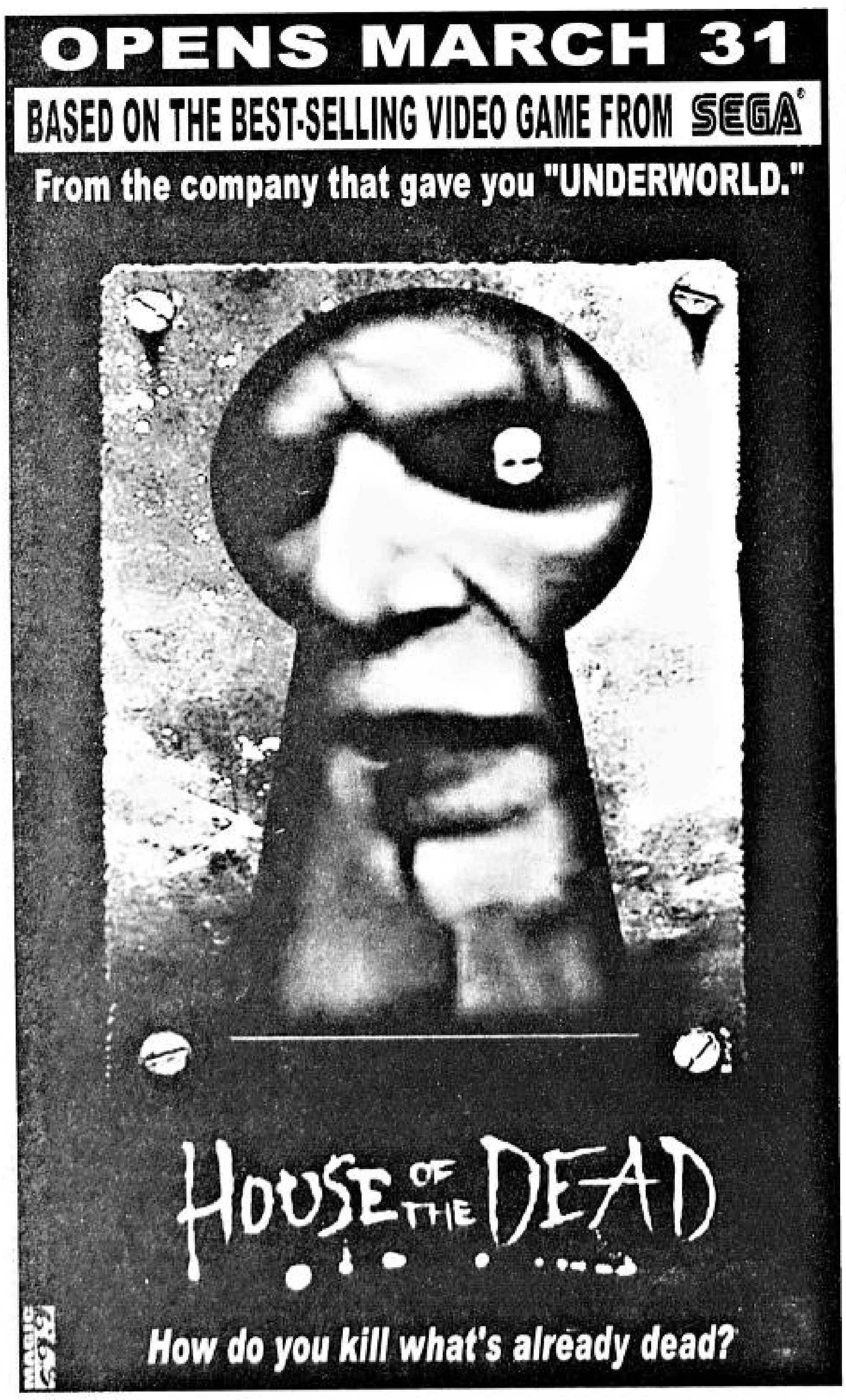

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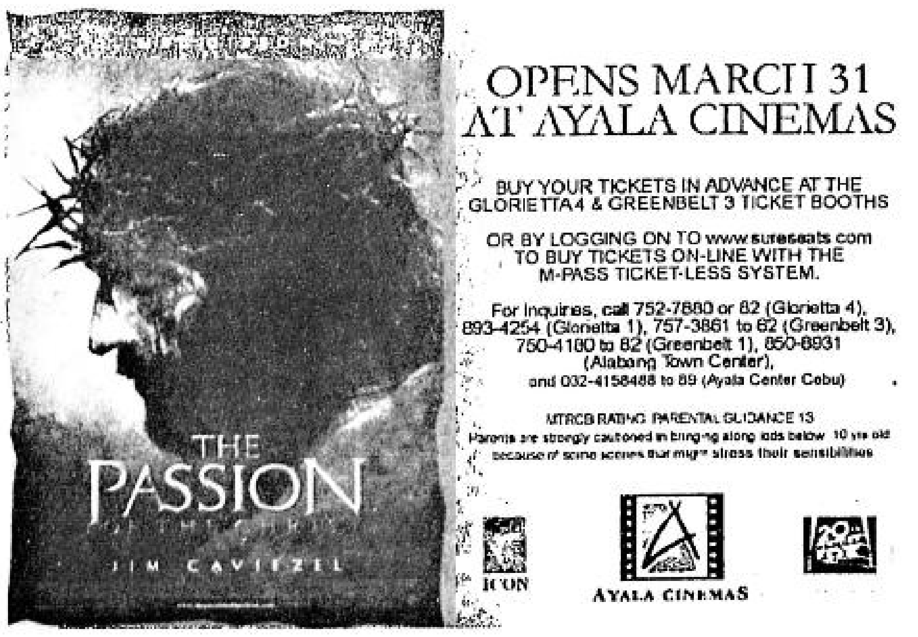

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ICON AYALA CINEMAS

Tears . . .

From page A26

Moreno, Helen Gamboa, director Wenn Deramas, movie producer Gaudioso Manalo and Matet's manager, Angge. Bridesmaids were Ciara Sotto and Camille Prats.

As the couple ended the church ceremony with a kiss, tears of joy also flowed from their eyes. They were first married in civil rites last Feb. 26. Matet is now three months pregnant.

Satin slippers

Her wedding gown was designed to fit her condition.

"She wanted it a bit loose because she wanted to be comfortable," designer Nono Palmos explained to INQUIRER Entertainment.

"That's why it's empire cut with an umbrella skirt. It also has a detachable second skirt."

The gown is made of ecru Duchess satin and is dotted with Swarovski crystals to emphasize its rose patterns. The train is five meters long, and the veil seven meters in length.

If the bride wasn't pregnant, she would have worn shoes with higher heels, said Palmos. Matet is a foot shorter thanMickey, who's a 6-foot-4 tall basketball player.

Matet settled for a pair of strappy shoes with two inch heels, which she traded for satin slippers during the reception.

Palmos also made the gowns of the bride's mother, the matron of honor, the bridesmaids and the flower girls. He explained that he could have made the gowns of the other members of the entourage if not for time constraint. The preparations took only a month, but everything went on smoothly.

"She only wanted the best for Matet," Palmos said, referring to his longtime client, Nora.

Nora was refreshingly stunning in an off-shoulder gown made of ecru chiffon with matte gold beadwork. The others glowed in old rose strapless gowns with ruffles in different variations.

Olie and Jorge Palmos of Palmos Weddings and Events made the bouquets, for the bride and her maids, from tulips, roses and carnations of monochromatic pink shades. The floral decoration inside the church were by Emma's Flower Shop.

Lessen jealousy

The reception was held at the Gazebo Royale on Visayas Avenue, but without the bride's parents. Christopher was said to had gone to a taping. Nora appeared an hour into dinner, dressed in a black-gray pinstriped suit also by Palmos. It's actually a three-piece tuxedo, he said, but because of the heat, Nora had decided not to wear the coat.

An audio-visual presentation of the couple's love story and individual backgrounds was shown during the buffet dinner catered by Hizon's.

"She wanted nothing but to have her own family," Angge, Matet's manager,

TEARS/ A24

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2 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT	2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN	2 50 FIRST DATES 11:50, 1:55, 4:00, 6:05, 8:10	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 50 FIRST DATES 2:55, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30	2 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT
3 OTSO-OTSO	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT 1:10, 3:30, 5:50, 8:10, 10:30	Onstage REPERTORY'S DRACULA Mar. 26, 27 & 28	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 2:15, 5:00, 7:45, 10:30	3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
4 50 FIRST DATES	4 THE MISSING		4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30	4 LOVE ACTUALLY
	5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 LOVE ACTUALLY 3:00, 5:45, 8:30, 11:15	5 OTSO-OTSO
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Editor Louie C. Camino

BRIDE and her groom. "It has always been her dream to have a family," says Matet's manager, Angge Lee.

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

MATET'S WEDDING

Tears, reunions, fans' day

By Jocelyn Valle
Contributor

THE BRIDE burst into tears the moment she saw her parents standing opposite each other in the middle of the aisle.

For Matet de Leon, the sight of her parents, Nora Aunor and Christopher de Leon, together was enough to send her to tears, even if their reunion was only for their youngest daughter's wedding last Saturday at the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City.

Nora and Christopher walked Matet down the aisle and gave her away to her groom, Mickey Estrada, who also couldn't hold back his tears.

Except for Ian de Leon, all of Matet's siblings celebrated the momentous occasion with her. Older sister Lotlot was her matron of honor, while her younger brothers Kenneth and Kiko were secondary sponsors.

Overflowing love

Lotlot's daughters by her estranged husband Ramon Christopher Gutierrez also joined the entourage. Maxine was flower girl and Janine and Jessica were usherettes. Ramon arrived only for the reception.

Matet and Mickey's overflowing love for each other warmed the hearts of their guests who filled the church. Not a few shed tears of joy for the young lovers. Mickey is 21 and Matet is 20.

Principal sponsors were led by former Caloocan mayor Macario Asistio, German

TEARS/ A25

Matet and Mickey's overflowing love for each other warmed the hearts of their guests

SISTER Lotlot, with kids Maxine (right) and Diego, is Matet's matron of honor. Her estranged husband, Ramon Christopher, arrived only for the reception.

PRINCIPAL sponsor Helen Gamboa was as glamorous as ever. She was with daughter Ciara Sotto, who is one of the bridesmaids.

NADIA Montenegro attends the event with companion former Caloocan City Mayor Macario Asistio, who is one of the principal sponsors.

FRIENDS of the groom. Mickey's teammates from the National University team in full support of their buddy

OPENS TOMORROW!
The sensational stars of "Twins Effect" return in the most horrifying blockbuster of 2004!
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UNIVERSE ENTERTAINMENT LIMITED presents
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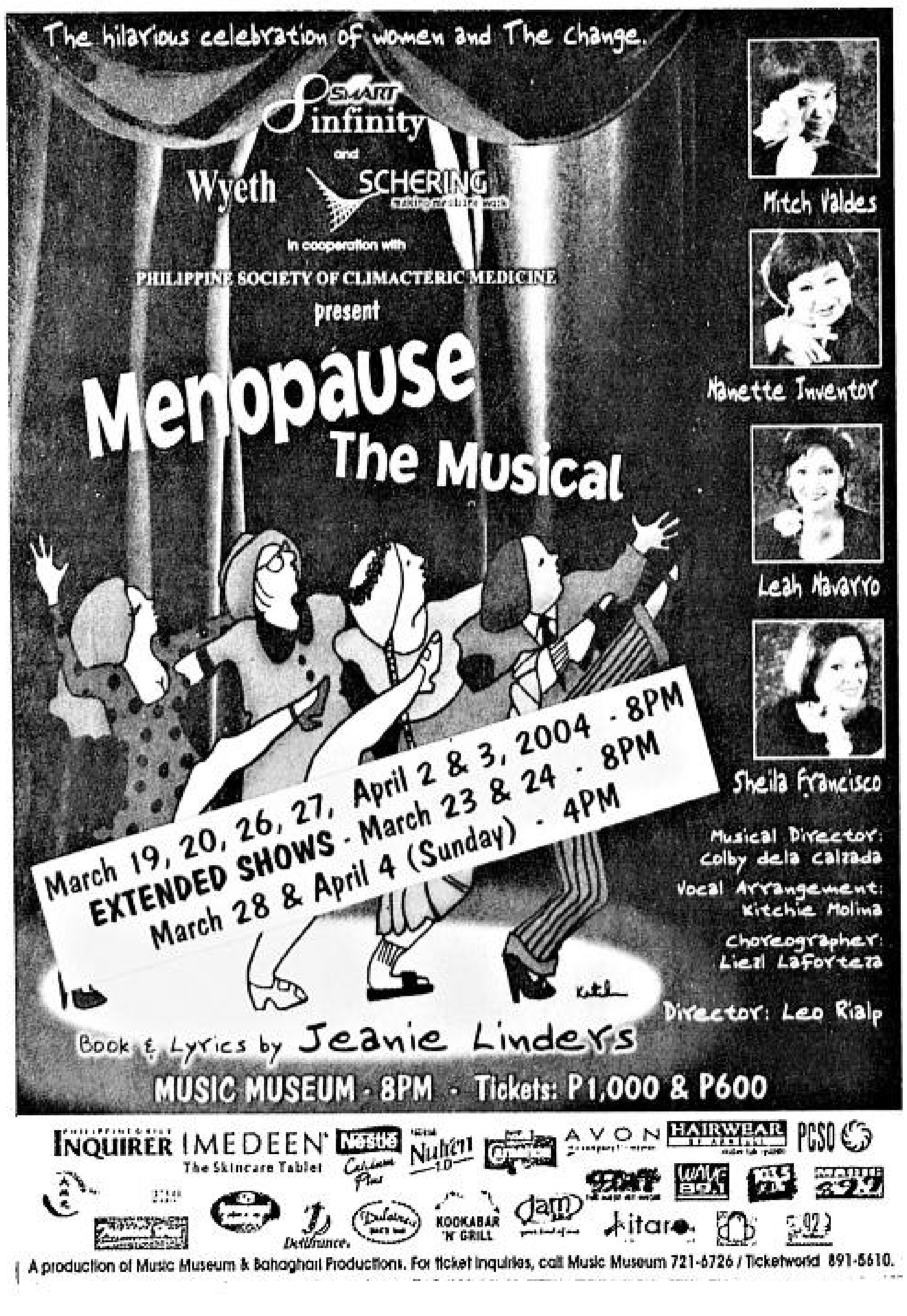
www.deathcurse.com Directed by: Cheang Pou-Soi



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present
Menopause The Musical
Mitch Valdes
Nanette Inventor
Leah Navarro
Sheila Francisco
March 19, 20, 26, 27, April 2 & 3, 2004 - 8PM
EXTENDED SHOWS - March 23 & 24 - 8PM
March 28 & April 4 (Sunday) - 4PM
Musical Director: Colby dela Calzada
Vocal Arrangement: Kitchie Molina
Choreographer: Liezl Laforteza
Director: Leo Rialp
Book & Lyrics by Jeanie Linders
MUSIC MUSEUM - 8PM - Tickets: P1,000 & P600
Inquirer IMEDEEN The Skincare Tablet Nestlé Nutren Avon Hairwear PCSO Kookabar 'N' Grill Kitaro
A production of Music Museum & Bahaghari Productions. For ticket inquiries, call Music Museum 721-6726 / Ticketworld 891-6610.

Two exceptional performances

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WE'RE so busy with writing, directing, teaching and editing projects these days that we don't have enough time to see shows. But we're glad that we were recently able to make time to catch blind pianist **Chuckie Ibay's** concert at the CCP Main Theater, and Tanghalang Filipino's "Hudhud" at the Little Theater.

Ibay's concert was a success not just because he was a gifted pianist and singer, but because his triumph over his disability inspired many members of the audience. Some of them weren't disabled, but they were inspired just the same to work harder and do better in their own lives.

We thank SinagTala's **Martin Lopez** for enabling the US-based Ibay to inspire his fellow Filipinos in the Philippines as well. And we hope that, some months from now, SinagTala can, as planned, bring Chuckie back, so he can go on a performance tour of the country.

This would go a long way in inspiring more people here—not just the disabled, but young people who need to summon up a greater sense of focus and resolve in their lives.

Chuckie Ibay is the perfect performing artist to reach out to this audience because he's still young, and yet he's achieved so much despite major limitations that would daunt most people.

Another illuminating production for us was "Hudhud," directed by **Nanding Josef**, at the Little Theater. Set in the Cordilleras, the production brought its old tale to vibrant life. Even better, Josef and his gifted cast made the ancient story's themes come to bear on viewers' sensibilities today.

The cast of actors, dancers and "chanters" worked really hard throughout the presentation, impressing us with their commitment and versatility. The sets and lights evoked a forgotten world that was precious and affecting to behold.

In that lambent landscape of the past and the living imagination, noble figures traced the dramatic arcs and arabesques of love, jealousy, tradition, fealty, strife, destiny and resolve to empathetic effect.

The storytelling was on the slim and slow side, but that was being true to the reflective pace and different sense of time of oral tradition. Still, we wondered if that frame of reference could be adjusted to make the storytelling more eventful for today's audiences.

In any case, "Hudhud" is already a success the way it is and should be staged anew later this year so that more people, especially the youth, can be reminded of the beauty, depth and range of our traditions and values, and of their continuing pertinence to our lives.

Entertainment Expo

THE ALIW Awards Foundation and Global Planners are presenting the first Philippine Entertainment Exposition on June 18 and 19 at the World Trade Center on Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

The expo brings together the major components of the local entertainment industry, highlighting Filipino entertainers in music, dance, theater, movies and television, including allied services and suppliers.

Participants include tri-media sponsors, cinemas, recording companies, concert promoters, talent management agencies, fashion designers and suppliers, audio-visual companies, dance outfits, travel and airline companies, and relevant government agencies.

Call **Aliw** at 521-8078, or Global Planners at 638-4585.

Summer film courses in Cebu

THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED International Academy of Film and Television in Cebu is offering summer courses to be taught by some veteran filmmakers from the States.

Andrew Durbin, a 20-year veteran of TV, animation and interactive entertainment, will teach Animation, Digital Editing and Web Design courses.

Rusty Lemorande, a film, TV and theme park veteran, will teach Acting, Screenwriting and Directing.

Rick Robinson has worked on numerous TV series and films as director of cinematography, and will teach courses related to his field of expertise.

Blen Fernandez, the dean of IAFT, has also invited his mentor, director **Behn Cervantes**, to teach Film Appreciation and Theater Production as a foundation for film and TV studies.

And **John K. Chua** will handle a weekend workshop on Advanced Digital Photography. Check out the academy's offerings at www.studyfilm.com.

May blue tamper proof seal ang tunay
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Petron hikes gasoline, kerosene prices

By Abigail L. Ho

PETRON Corp. yesterday followed the lead of local oil importers and jacked up the prices of its gasoline by 60 centavos a liter and kerosene by 40 centavos a liter.

Starting noon yesterday, Petron's gasoline products could be bought at the following prices: XCS at P23.74, unleaded premium at P23.08, Blaze at P24.22, and regular gasoline at P22.09. Kerosene, on the other hand, could be bought at P18.22 a liter.

Company officials cited high prices of crude oil and refined products in the world market for the increase.

During the March 1-19 period, the benchmark Dubai crude averaged $30.75 a barrel, climbing more than $2 from the February average of $28.61 a barrel.

Dubai crude hit a 13-month high last March 12 at $31.17 a barrel.

The peso-dollar exchange rate likewise surged to 56.26:$1 during the March 1-19 period compared with 56.10 to a greenback in February.

However, Petron kept the price of the socially sensitive diesel at an average of P17.90 a liter.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., an oil refiner like Petron, has yet to announce a price adjustment as of press time.

Last Saturday, third largest player Caltex Philippines Inc. initiated the gasoline and kerosene price increases, the fourth this year, by the same levels.

New players Total (Philippines) Corp., Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V and Unioil also raised their prices by the same rates on the same day.

These five oil firms, as they had no refinery operations here, based their prices on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for finished products.

As of the second week of March, MOPS-based gasoline prices had reached $44-$45 a barrel.

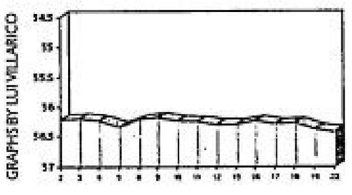
Current prices were a far cry from those in October, which averaged $30.45 a barrel, in November at $32.45, in December at $34.66, and in January at $40.27.

But the 60-centavo increase was not enough to make up for under-recoveries worth about P1.20 a liter accumulated over the past few months because of escalating prices in the world market, said Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (IPPCA) chair Fernando Martinez.

THE PHILIPPINE Business for Social Progress has inked a P10-million scholarship grant with the Armed Forces of the Philippines to expand educational opportunities for AFP personnel and their dependents. The grant is expected to benefit about 1,500 beneficiaries all over the country. Present during the signing are (from left): SGV & Co. chair David Balangue; Philippine Daily Inquirer chair Marixi Prieto; PBSP and PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya, Defense Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina; and AFP Vice Admiral Ariston Delos Reyes.

[illegible]

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.42= $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 22, 2004

Y 106.96 = $ 1

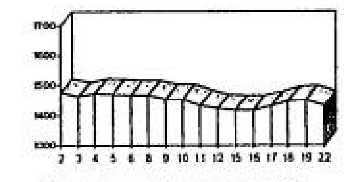
As of 5 p.m., March 22, 2004

GOLD: $410.50-411.00

per ounce Hong Kong, March 19, 2004

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks down 1.32%

SHARE prices closed down 1.32 percent yesterday as Friday's losses on Wall Street and the peso's plunge to record lows over the morning weighed on sentiment, dealers said.

They said the sharp downturn in the peso appeared to reflect corporate dollar purchases as they managed their exposure ahead of the May 10 presidential elections.

Investor sentiment has been nervous as campaigning continues for the polls, while sharply weaker regional markets did not help confidence.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index was down 19.16 points at 1,431.67, off a high of 1,450.90.

Losers beat gainers 31 to 25, while 43 stocks closed unchanged.

Volume was 509.1 million shares worth P371.7 million after 646.98 million shares worth P617.19 million on Friday.

The all-shares index was down 8.46 points at 910.85 while the commercial-industrial index fell 25.29 to 2,243.76, property fell 11.28 to 502.45 while the mining sector gained 13.71 to 1,438.58.

Oil was down 0.01 at 1.18 while banking and financial services shed 4.57 to 424.96.

"Sentiment is negative, following losses in the US market on Friday and the peso's continuing fall," Westlink Global Equities chair Rommel Macapagal said.

On Friday, the peso hit its weakest-ever closing low of 56.38 to the dollar after the central bank was seen to have withdrawn its support for the local unit at 56.35. **AFP**

INTEREST RATES

March 22, 2004-
MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 22-Mar-04	MART1 19-Mar-04
1 Month	7.9146	7.7
3 Months	8.1964	8.02
6 Months	9.1696	8.98
1 Year	10.0232	9.9163
2 Years	10.8286	10.6733
3 Years	11.5692	11.3595
4 Years	11.8393	11.6683
5 Years	12.2357	12.065
7 Years	12.7214	12.615
10 Years	12.9875	12.8625
20 Years	13.2196	13.0783
25 Years	13.4679	13.3783

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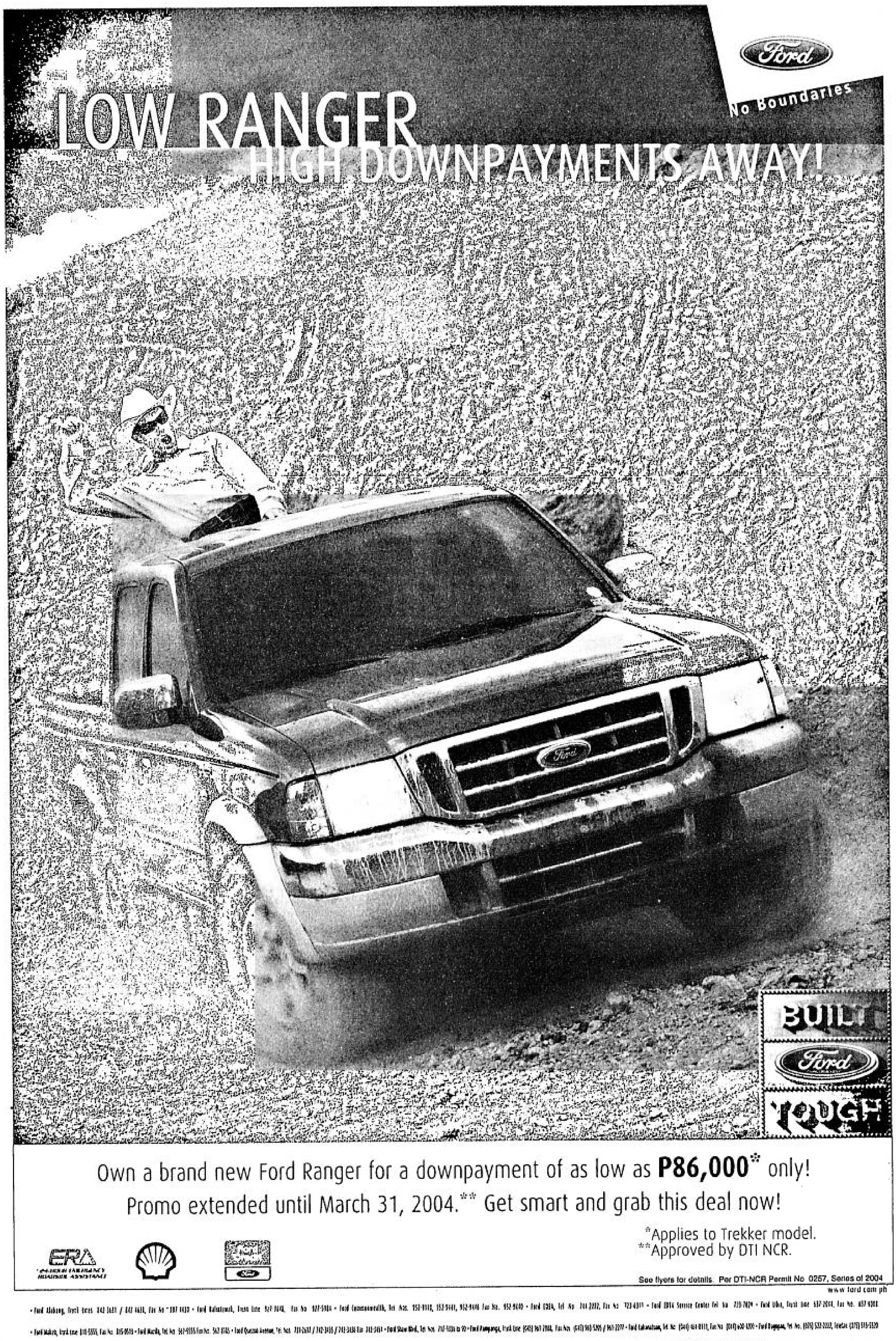

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Hard and fast ruse

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

INSIDE air-conditioned malls and restaurants in this country, a lot of selfish Neanderthals still smoke cigarettes mindlessly. Something is wrong.

In other countries, they have some hard and fast rules on smoking, whether you are smoking cigarette, smoking cigar, or smoking your pants.

There, if you light up, you have to be at least several galaxies away from the person nearest you. And you still have to ask for permission! Written, okay!

What happened, anyway, to the law which banned smoking in public places all over the country? It seems to me that the law already did a Dolphy.

Reportedly, as you know, because he campaigned for his friend Sideburns, the comedian lost his high-paying job, his undoing being the work of politics and big business.

The anti-smoking law, it seems to me, similarly got caught in the claws of politics and big business. Hint: Philip Morris.

***

TO think, that was the same law which already made big screaming headlines sometime in June last year, courtesy of Sen. Juan Flavier.

There must be a ruse here somewhere. Today, less than a year after its approval, the law seems to be already forgotten.

To sneak the law into the busy agenda of this hardworking Congress, which passed a total of ONE economic bill, Flavier took advantage of a little opening.

It came about when, around that time, some 192 countries approved an international agreement on tobacco trade control, upon instigation of the WHO.

That has nothing to do with the rock band. It is actually the World Health Organization. It saw a need for the pact with all the free trade going around the world.

It was called the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, or FCTC. It would try to control cross-border trade of cigarettes. In short, BAD for US cigarette firms!

***

IN the worldwide trend toward trade liberalization, actually, US cigarette companies saw a chance to increase sales by putting up a factory, say, in a single ... well, "friendly" state.

Selling to other countries, anyway, preferably the poor ones, will not be a problem, thanks to the world trade liberalization being pushed by the US government.

And so several years ago, in 1999, the WHO initiated the FCTC, as a means of course to try to neutralize the ill effects of world free trade on cigarette addiction.

Actually, this trade liberalization only gave cigarette firms the means to go around the strict smoking laws in their home base.

The WHO probably looked at free trade in the same way our parents and teachers looked at ... well, free sex. It is not good!

***

IT TOOK the WHO about four years to get the approval of 192 countries for the FCTC, thanks primarily to the usual well-funded tobacco lobby.

Who should delay the FCTC approval but the rich countries, such as the United States, Germany and Japan, headquarters of the world's biggest cigarette businesses?

Threatening to put the FCTC into the garbage bin, those very countries refused to sign the agreement in the beginning.

They finally relented after four years, but knowing how wily the tobacco lobbyists can be, I'm afraid they have something else up their sleeves.

The next step is the approval of the FCTC by individual countries. Here in this country international treaties must pass through the Senate. Uh-oh!

***

SINCE the Senate would be the next foraying ground of the strong tobacco lobby, Johnny Flavier apparently saw the chance to push for his baby—the anti-smoking bill.

In the WHO, the delegates are also health officials. They are likely to go for tobacco trade control. The tobacco lobby does not have a chinaman's chance.

But in our Senate, the prospects of the treaty getting bumped off are better for the tobacco lobbyists, who can use mind-altering devices technically known as bribe.

From what I gathered, Flavier used the FCTC as a bait to the other senators. You know—just approve his anti-smoking bill, and the FCTC could wait.

And so Flavier got the no-smoking-in-public-place law. Up to today, nine months later, it is not yet being enforced. That's how good the tobacco lobbyists are.

***

SURE, the law exists, but a group of people known as "committee," as usual, is taking forever to come up with the implementing rules.

From what I heard, the committee debates on everything, from the placement of the comma to the color of the underwear of the computer operator.

Obviously, the committee is delaying the implementing rules. The lobby against the law must be pretty strong.

Seated at the right hand of the committee chair, you see, is the top official of the National Tobacco Authority.

We all know why the authority exists. Its main reason for being is to look after the interest of cigarette companies, preferably those using the "blue seal."

***

FOR our contacts say that, all the while, the NTA is actually mouthing the line of US cigarette companies.

Now one of them, Philip Morris, just put up a big factory here. It was refused entry in places like Singapore, Malaysia, and even Vietnam.

Here in this country, where this cute administration of Gloriaetta does not even know what to do with the monstrous budget deficit, Philip Morris got a big welcome.

This cute administration even gave Philip Morris some tax breaks. What's more, Gloriaetta herself attended the inauguration of the Philip Morris killer factory.

Let me see if I get this right—and so our government is giving the US company a lot of money, with Gloriaetta's obvious blessings, so that it can give us lung cancer.

***

BUT of course this cute administration justifies its special treatment for Philip Morris with the usual government line about ... well, "investments."

Supposedly, the Philip Morris, er, "investments" would eventually generate more government revenues.

In 1999, just about when this cute administration gave Philip Morris a big favor, a study was done, showing government revenue from tobacco at P26 billion that year.

But the economic cost of smoking (i.e. lung cancer, other diseases, loss of productivity) was a whopping P41 billion that very same year.

The thing is, cigarette firms like Philip Morris, make a lot of money, much more than the government revenue of P26 billion.

Yet they have nothing to do with the P41 billion economic cost of smoking. This cost, as you know, is borne by the public at large! So why should this cute administration care a hoot, right?

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 22, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.5	18	17.5	17.75	52,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	44.5	45	44.5	44.5	100,000
China Banking Corp.	680	680	680	680	128,220
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39	39	38.5	38.5	65,700
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	140,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	24.5	24.5	24.25	24.25	79,700
Philippine National Bank	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	4,400
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	15,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26	26	25.5	25.5	3,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	180	180	180	180	60
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1455	1455	1430	1430	230
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23	23.25	22.75	22.75	28,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.68	1,760,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	850	850	845	845	24,600
ISM Communications Corp.	0.038	0.038	0.036	0.036	6,300,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.74	1.78	1.74	1.74	10,448,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	925	925	920	920	70,940
Ivantage Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	30,000
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.011	0.012	219,600,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19	19	18.5	18.5	26,200
Manila Electric Co. B	30	30	28	28	928,800
Petron Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.9	2.9	519,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2	2	2	2	18,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	39,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3	3	3	3	129,000
Negros Navigation Co.Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	100,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	230,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	50,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.52	1.56	1.52	1.56	400,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16.75	17	16.5	16.5	507,400
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	56.5	55	56	124,600
San Miguel Corp. B	70.5	70.5	69	69.5	24,300
Universal Robina Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	20,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	20,000
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.1	3,322,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	2,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1	1	1	140,000
APC Group Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	1,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	35,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	40,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.56	0.59	0.56	0.57	28,910,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.15	900,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	520,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.024	0.024	0.021	0.021	2,400,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1	1	1	60,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	22	22	21.25	21.5	141,800
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	30,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	400,000
Ionics Inc.	1.36	1.6	1.36	1.6	52,000
Megaworld Corp.	1	1.02	1	1	520,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	20,710,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	500,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	290,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	80,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	14	14	14	14	10,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.085	0.0975	0.085	0.0975	3,100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. B	1.94	1.94	1.94	1.94	101,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	6,352,000
Pryce Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	15,550,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.49	0.5	0.49	0.5	150,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	12,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.5	23.5	23	23	1,314,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,800
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
OTHERS					
Far Eastern University	400	400	400	400	580
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	974,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	10,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	60,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	10,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.21	0.215	0.21	0.215	4,000,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	20,000
Filinvest Land Inc	1	1	1	1	350,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.185	1,820,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.22	300,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	487,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	3,171,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.2	0.205	0.195	0.205	1,040,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	250,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	11,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026	12,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.37	270,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.39	340,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	100,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	2,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	70,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	20,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.03	0.034	0.028	0.03	1,800,000

Meralco returns to profit

MANILA Electric Co (Meralco), the country's largest power distributor, yesterday said it had returned to profit in the fourth quarter of 2003, helped by better sales after a huge loss a year earlier.

Debt-laden Meralco, limping from a court-ordered refund of $562 million to customers and the suspension of another price rise, is seen staging a stronger recovery this year as electricity use soars thanks to a general election on May 10 and an improving economy.

Meralco—25 percent owned by the government and 23 percent by Spanish utility Union Fenosa SA—said it had a net income of P907 million in 2003, after a full-year loss of P2.0 billion in 2002.

Based on calculations, this meant the company had a fourth-quarter profit of P267 million, rebounding from last year's heavy loss, but still below market estimates.

A survey of five brokerages showed that Meralco—which supplies power to about four million homes and businesses in and around Manila—was expected to report a fourth-quarter profit of between P350 million and P895 million. *Reuters*

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- Strategy Formulation and Formation
- Building the Entrepreneurial Organization
- Understanding Entrepreneurial Partnerships
- Installing Systems That Drive Entrepreneurial Performance

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DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30, 4 p.m. at the 19/F of PSBank Centre, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 12 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

***

MABUHAY Holdings Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 25, 10 a.m. at the New World Hotel, Makati City. Record date is April 5.

***

PAYMENT date for **Union Bank** of the Philippines' cash dividend declaration was moved to April 30 from May 3.

***

UNIVERSAL Robina Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 4, 4 p.m. at the Amorsolo Ballroom of Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Pasig City. Stockholders of record as of April 2 will be entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

***

UNION Cement Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 19, 10 a.m. at the New World Renaissance Hotel, Makati City. Record date is April 19.

***

GREGORIO Navarro was designated new engagement partner by **Punongbayan & Araullo** for the audit of the financial statements of Megaworld Corp. and Empire East Land Holdings Inc.

***

PRUDENTIAL Bank board extended Jose Santos' term as CEO for three more years. Edilberto David III resigned as vice president and assistant head of the credit division effective March 16, 2004.

***

GINEBRA San Miguel Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 22, 2 p.m. at the executive dining room, 2/F of San Miguel Head Office Complex, Mandaluyong City. Stockholders of record as of Feb. 27 are entitled to vote at the meeting. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

March 22, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.814464897	1.000000	56.3200
Japan	Yeh	0.007635	0.009374	0.5279
United Kingdom	Pound	1.492833	1.832900	103.2289
Hongkong	Dollar	0.10452	0.128330	7.2275
Switzerland	Franc	0.641362	0.787464	44.3500
Canada	Dollar	0.611093	0.750300	42.2569
Singapore	Dollar	0.481163	0.590772	33.2723
Australia	Dollar	0.609036	0.747775	42.1147
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.160499	2.652661	149.3979
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.217208	0.266688	15.0199
Brunei	Dollar	0.479746	0.589032	33.1743
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000117	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020683	0.025394	1.4302
UAE	Dirham	0.221756	0.272272	15.3344
Euro	Euro	1	1.227800	69.1497
Argentina	Peso	0.2828	0.347222	19.5555
Brazil	REAL	0.280947	0.344947	19.4274
Denmark	Kroner	0.134296	0.164889	9.2865
India	Rupee	0.018035	0.022143	1.2471
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.214361	0.263193	14.8230
Mexico	New Peso	0.074313	0.091241	5.1387
New Zealand	Dollar	0.533132	0.654579	36.8659
Norway	Kroner	0.118058	0.144951	8.1636
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014256	0.017504	0.9858
South Africa	Rand	0.122977	0.150991	8.5038
Korea	Won	0.000705	0.000865	0.0487
Sweden	Kroner	0.108266	0.132929	7.4866
Syria	Pound	0.015784	0.019380	1.0915
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024562	0.030157	1.6984
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000425	0.000522	0.0294

February budget deficit stays below target

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERMENT'S budget gap stood below the P20-billion mark in February, indicating it was well on track to meeting its deficit target for the first quarter of the year.

National Treasurer Mina Figueroa told reporters that preliminary figures showed the budget deficit for February was less than P20 billion, giving more room for government's expenditure requirements for the first three months of the year.

The government has set its first-quarter deficit target at P58.9 billion.

A less than P20-billion deficit for February would translate to a budget gap of not more than P36 billion for the first two months of the year. This means the government can still afford to have a budget gap of about P22 billion for March and still meet its target for the quarter.

Last January, the budget shortfall stood at P16.12 billion.

Aiming to achieve a zero deficit in 2009, the government is hard-pressed to improve revenue collection as well as exercise prudence in spending.

The government has tasked the Bureau of Internal Revenue, which accounts for about 80 percent of government revenue, to increase its collection by more than 12 percent to P477 billion. It has likewise tasked the Bureau of Customs to collect P112 billion, or higher than its P106-billion contribution last year.

"We will stick to our fiscal deficit target of 4.2 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) or approximately P197.8 billion for 2004. This is based on our deficit reduction program over the medium term in order to achieve fiscal consolidation by 2009," Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said.

Last year, the government's deficit was recorded at P199.9 billion, or below the P202-billion target. The government's ability to keep the deficit last year at a better-than-scheduled level was attributed to the improvement in the collection of the BIR and the BOC.

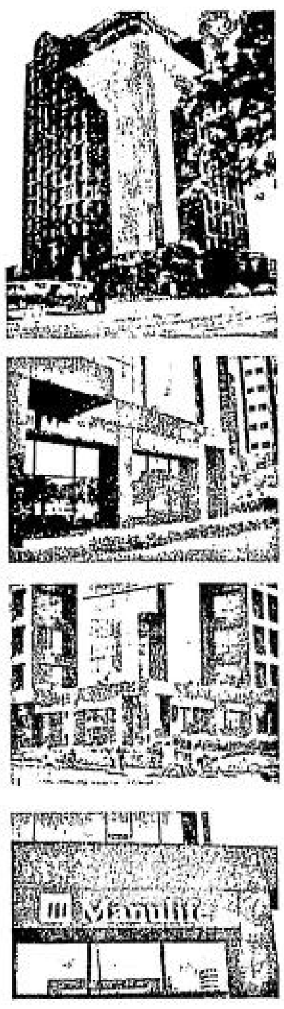
Both agencies were able to surpass their collection targets last year, the first time in years.

The government is contemplating on coming up with a set of new revenue-generation measures that are expected to increase collection of the BIR by about P40 billion per year.

The inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee is set to discuss these measures in its next meeting. The measures will require either administrative reforms or legislation of new tax laws.

An official from the Department of Finance earlier said the list of revenue-enhancement measures would include the tightening of collection of common carriers tax on water transport, rationalization of fiscal incentives on importation of capital equipment, and the long-pending rationalization of excise tax on "sin" products. The imposition of a tax on text messages may also be discussed, said another official.

ANNOUNCEMENT



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BSP cautions against use of 'debt restructuring' term

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura yesterday cautioned against loosely using the term "debt restructuring" to refer to stretching out of maturities.

The BSP chief, who said last week there was room for the next administration to lengthen debt maturities to improve the country's debt profile, said reports about a restructuring could make creditors nervous and lead them to ask for higher interest rates on new loans.

"Refinancing is the correct word if we mean borrowing long-term to pay loans that are falling due shortly," Buenaventura clarified.

"Bond exchange is another. It refers to offering creditors new notes with longer maturity in exchange for those that are falling due," he said.

Buenaventura said these efforts were part of the government's liability management—stretching out maturities to ease the debt burden until the country generates enough revenues and grows substantially to finally break the cycle of borrowings.

The national government recently swapped bonds when creditors accepted higher yielding notes maturing in 2011 in exchange for those falling due in the next two years or so.

Debt restructuring itself was not bad, he added, but said the term carried a negative perception that might make it more difficult for the country to borrow abroad.

Every percentage point increase in loan rates translates to an additional P1-billion budget deficit, he pointed out.

"We have always dealt with our creditors responsibly and we will continue to do so," he said.

"Given the perception that some people might think that debt restructuring is debt repudiation, it is best that we understand and use only the correct technical terms," he said.

Buenaventura said last week the country's consolidated public sector debt had an average 19-year maturity profile but it may be possible to term out some of these liabilities.

Presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. earlier called for a debt restructuring, which he said would not be unilateral act on the part of the government but instead be done with the full consent and cooperation of the creditors.

His comments shook out the financial markets on the eve of a sovereign global bond offering but the succeeding clarification allayed fears that the restructuring proposed would be tantamount to a debt moratorium.

FPJ's team clarified that the proposal meant stretching the amortization period of the country's debt, so that interest payments deferred could be channeled to projects that would spur economic growth.

The Philippines' total foreign debt stock is projected to rise to $59.4 billion by year's end from the $56.7-billion level estimated for 2003.

Malacañang forms anti-smuggling office

By Michelle V. Remo

MALACAÑANG has ordered the creation of an Office of the Anti-Smuggling Presidential Adviser to help crack down on large-scale smuggling activities that pose a serious threat to the viability of local businesses.

Under EO 297, which was issued early this month, President Macapagal-Arroyo said the office would draw up measures to reduce violations of the Tariff and Customs Code, and to establish programs for a national campaign against smuggling.

Anti-kidnapping Presidential Adviser Angelo Reyes will head the office, which will be directly under the Office of the President.

The office will also be tasked to conduct intelligence operations against smuggling activities and will be authorized to arrest smugglers.

The EO likewise mandates the creation of an inter-agency oversight committee to assist the newly created office. The oversight committee will be composed of representatives from the departments of Finance, Interior and Local Government, National Defense, Justice, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, and Transportation and Communication.

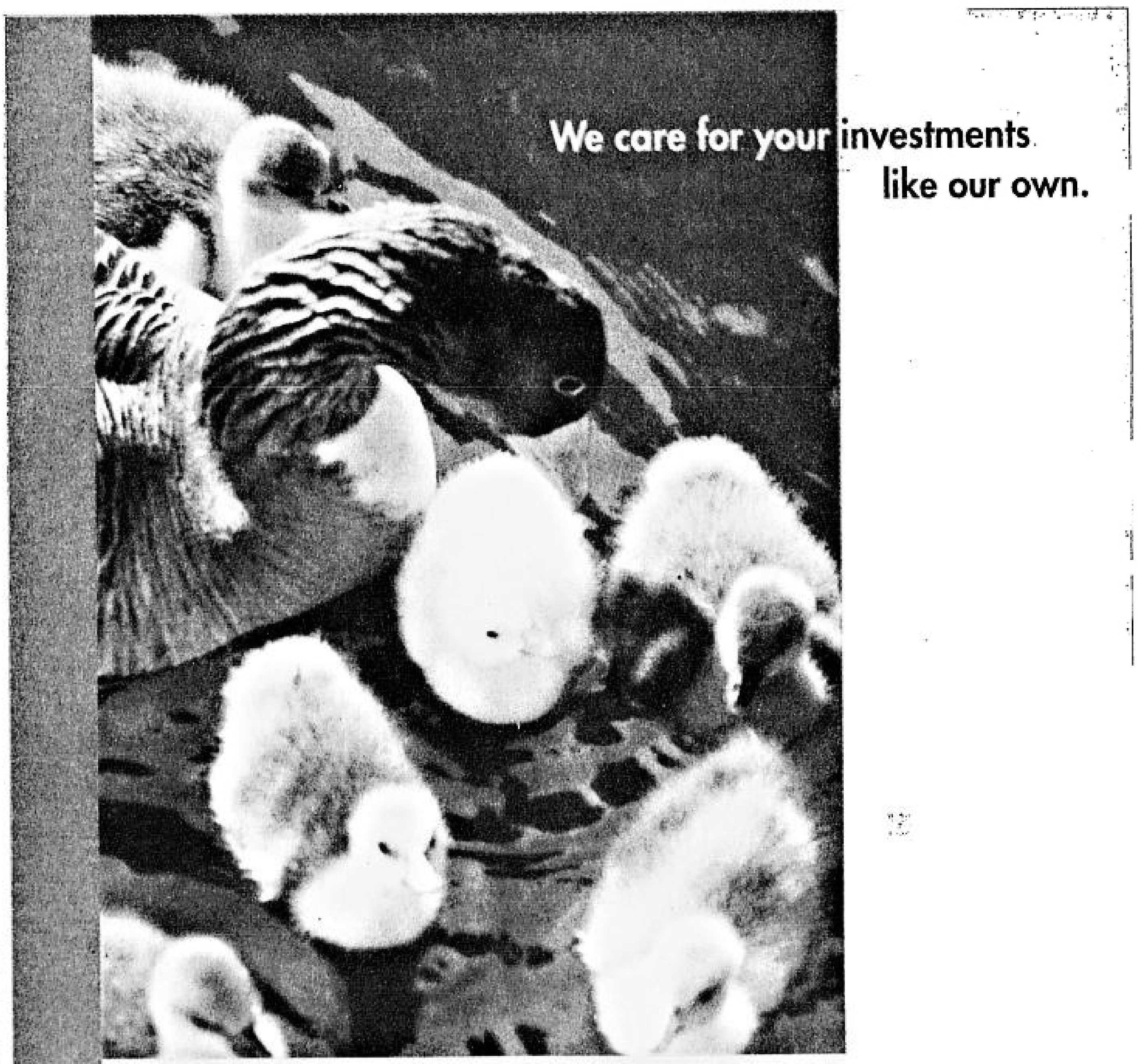
"This would facilitate the sharing of information among key agencies which would be very useful in the drive against smuggling," said Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, who will represent the DOF in the anti-smuggling office.

The government's move to put more teeth into its anti-smuggling drive followed recent discovery of large-scale smuggling activities. Earlier, the Department of Agriculture detected the illegal entry of container vans of chickens into the country's ports.

Prior to this, Malacañang released P500 million for the modernization of the operations of the Bureau of Customs. The installation of additional modern equipment in the BOC was partly intended to help the agency detect smuggling.

Several local industries have long called for increased monitoring of the country's ports to curb smuggling, which they said had been eating a significant share of the domestic market.

Industries such as shoe making, tire manufacturing and plywood production have had pending complaints regarding the unfair competition from smuggled items.



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[1] In terms of volume growth from 2001 to 2003
[2] Market share growth from 1999 to 2003
[3] Watson Wyatt survey for the past 3-year period (2000 to 2002) and the past 5-year period (1998 to 2003)
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Markets stumble over Wall St., Taiwan poll

SINGAPORE—Asian stock markets fell on Monday, led by Taiwan's near-seven percent tumble after a razor-thin election win for the president prompted widespread protests and opposition calls for a recount.

The fall on Wall Street on Friday contributed to Asia's weakness. Tokyo's Nikkei average dropped 0.87 percent in morning trade to 11,319.15

"Even without any election disputes, Taiwan stocks would have fallen due to the US stock fall," said Michael On, managing director of Beyond Asset Management which has $60 million under management. "The political instability intensified the selling."

The Taiwan dollar slipped 0.3 percent to T$33.353 per US dollar after the central bank promised to support the currency.

Fears of a political crisis wiped out $28 billion in investor wealth, and triggered central bank intervention to underpin the island's dollar, according to analysts.

Investors fled heightened risks after President Chen Shui-bian's election victory on Saturday was challenged by his opponent, Lien Chan.

Taiwan's main stock index, which had been the best-performing in Asia this year outside China, ended down 6.7 percent at 6,359.92, as most stocks fell their daily limit of seven percent.

Still, foreign investors bought a net T$7.55 billion ($227 million) of stocks, the stock exchange said.

Despite the market rout and rising risk, Fitch Ratings said it was unlikely to change its A-plus sovereign credit rating.

"From what we've seen so far, I don't think it suggests to me that it's going to be a major problem," said Brian Coulton, a senior director at Fitch Ratings in charge of Asian sovereign ratings.

Taiwan's central bank earlier pledged to maintain exchange rate stability following the dispute over the outcome of its presidential election.

"The central bank will enter the market to maintain the Taiwan dollar's dynamic stability," Economics Minister Lin Hsin-yi said on Sunday.

The bank's stated policy is to allow the Taiwan dollar to follow market trends, but it intervenes to soften sharp moves.

The dollar firmed against the yen, but traders anticipated more pressure on the US currency after the beating it took from its Japanese counterpart last week.

The dollar traded at 107.54 yen, up from 106.65 in late New York on Friday. The euro traded around 131.67 yen, a touch higher from Friday.

US stocks were expected to stay volatile this week as investors keep a wary eye on security threats around the world and watch for hints on first-quarter profits.

On Friday, the Dow Jones industrial average fell 1.06 percent to 10,186.60 and the technology-laden Nasdaq Composite Index fell 1.12 percent, to 1,940.47. It was the second straight down week for both indices. *Reuters*

TAIWAN stock investors check share prices at a trading house in Taipei. Shares in Taiwan opened by plunging more than 6.5 percent Monday, close to their daily limit of 7 percent as traders fretted over the disputed presidential election. AP

In Asia, fuel prices seen to stay firm

SINGAPORE—Gasoline and jet-kerosene prices in most of Asia this week are set to stay firm on steady to stronger demand, but ample supplies are likely to drag fuel oil lower, traders said on Monday.

In China, gasoline prices would remain firm as tight supplies meet healthy regional demand.

According to analysts, strong demand from Australia and New Zealand may stretch fuel supplies further.

Current and planned refinery maintenance programs in China, the Philippines, Malaysia and New Zealand will continue to choke off regional supply, traders said.

Worries about a gasoline supply crunch in the United States in the run-up to the summer driving season in May is also a supportive factor, they said.

The jet-kerosene market is expected to be supported by Chinese demand.

Although China Aviation Oil, which supplies almost all of jet fuel imports into China, bought 540,000 tons of jet fuel for the second quarter, traders are expecting fresh Chinese demand.

"The new Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport is expected to boost jet fuel demand," a trader said.

On the other hand, the naphtha and gas oil markets could be hit by ebbing demand, traders said.

Naphtha demand is cooling ahead of the second-quarter cracker turnaround season in North Asia, they added.

"The prompt price is very weak," a trader in Singapore said. "There are hardly any buyers. There is no supply problem even with refinery turnarounds."

Gas oil demand is likely to stay weak as high prices in Singapore are putting off buyers in Vietnam, which is Asia's second-biggest importer of the product after Indonesia.

"So far, prices in Singapore are very high," a trader said. "(Vietnamese) importers are losing money."

Fuel oil's crack spread to Dubai are expected to weaken further, weighed down by abundant incoming western supplies.

"Fuel oil's crack will weaken because of cargoes coming in," a trader said.

April fuel oil crack was valued on Monday at minus $5.50 a barrel, 15 cents wider than Friday. *Reuters*

Bank efforts to reduce bad loans threaten to slow down

TOKYO—The fear of letting assets fall into foreign hands is hampering Asian efforts to reduce the mass of bad loans in the region, according to the consultancy firm Ernst & Young.

Asian banks have cleared more than $1 trillion in nonperforming loans (NPLs) over the six years since an economic crisis ravaged much of the region in 1997 and 1998, Ernst & Young on Monday said in its 2004 global NPL report.

But another $1 trillion still weighs on the region's bank books, threatening to hamper growth in China and elsewhere, and stifle a nascent recovery in countries such as Japan, saddled with the highest volume of NPLs in the world.

"Asia's banks have made remarkable progress in disposing of their bad loans, but they need to keep the momentum going—they cannot afford to become complacent," said Jack Rodman, author of the report and an Ernst & Young managing director in Beijing.

In comparison, European banks are carrying at least $300 billion in bad loans, according to the report.

Rodman said China and Japan together account for about 85 percent of Asia's NPLs.

Banks that must make provisions against loan losses when borrowers fail to make payments may find themselves too strapped or too wary to lend to healthy businesses, slowing economic growth.

China, which is working to clean up its banking sector ahead of liberalization in 2006, has cut about $200 billion in bad loans from its banks' books over the past six years.

Japan, still emerging from a decade-long stagnation caused partly by overzealous bank lending, has been able to slash some $600 billion in bad debt.

In a bid to dispose of NPLs, banks have sometimes resorted to selling the assets to foreign investment funds—a growing business in Japan, but one rife with political complications.

The sale of the failed Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan by the government to a Ripplewood Holdings-led consortium prompted much soul-searching as the nation debated the wisdom of letting a Japanese lender fall into foreign hands.

A stake in the bank, renamed Shinsei Bank, was successfully floated on the Tokyo stock market in February—its shares soaring nearly 60 percent on the first day of trade.

Rodman said future success in tackling NPLs globally meant giving foreign funds—which have amassed as much as $20 billion to acquire distressed assets worldwide this year—a bigger role.

"The success of the NPL market depends on foreign investors taking the initiative to buy portfolios of bad loans and, in some cases, bad banks," he said.

Other Asian nations have made moves to slash bad debt from their financial systems, the report said.

Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand—major victims of the Asian crisis—have erased $257 billion in bad loans since 1998, with South Korea making up $125 billion of that total. *Reuters*

Identity thefts push up sale of shredders

NEW YORK—Yuri Fernandez discovered recently that a stranger could snatch bills and receipts from his trash and empty his bank account.

To avoid that possibility, Fernandez, 32, did what a lot of other people are doing nowadays: He went out and bought a shredder.

"I really need one of these," said the Broadway theater worker, eyeing a $35 shredder at Staples Inc. in New York City.

The rise in identity theft—a nightmare for tens of millions of Americans—has done wonders for the shredding industry.

Last year, sales of shredders jumped 50 percent at Staples.

The boom in document destroyers goes hand-in-hand with a surge in crimes involving stolen personal information, from credit card accounts to Social Security numbers.

An estimated 27.3 million Americans have been victims of identity theft over the last five years, including 10 million in the last year alone, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

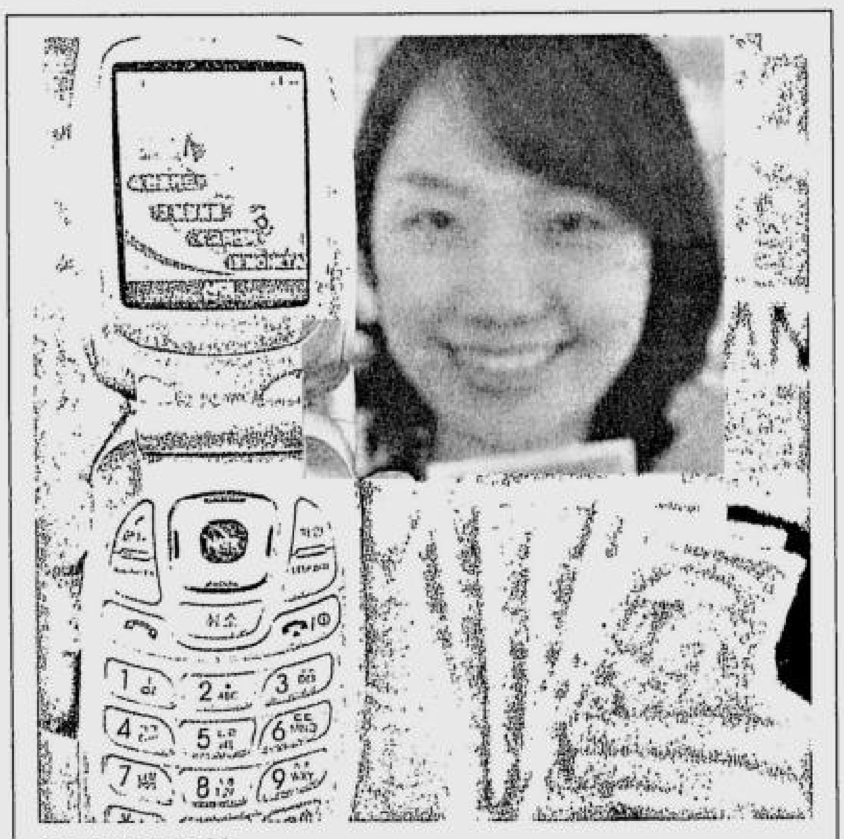
The FTC reports that identity theft cost consumers $5 billion in out-of-pocket expenses last year, and businesses and financial institutions nearly $48 billion.

Commercial shredding is also booming, as many companies have become more vigilant.

"We've seen a double-digit growth as an industry in the last year," said Robert Johnson, executive director of the National Association for Information Destruction. "It's definitely a boom time for people in the business."

New privacy legislation, coupled with the collapse of Enron Corp.—the bankrupt firm fighting criminal charges that include unlawful destruction of company-related materials—has prompted other companies to adopt a shred-all policy, he said.

Shredders have grown in popularity since their invention in the 1930s, gaining historical prominence with the destruction of documents at the besieged US Embassy in Tehran in 1979 after the fall of the Shah of Iran. REUTERS



CASH ON CALL

An employee of Hana Bank shows new online banking services using mobile phones at the bank's headquarters in Seoul, South Korea. The service uses a mobile phone network provided by South Korea's top mobile carrier SK telecom. AFP

China bent on stabilizing yuan to prevent bad fall

BEIJING—China is striving to avoid a hard landing by seeking stability in the nation's economic growth and hotly debated yuan currency, state media said on Monday.

At a high level annual meeting that began on Sunday, Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan said China was taking a series of measures to achieve economic stability to avoid "big ups and downs," the official China Securities Journal reported.

Zeng, a senior official with a big hand in economic issues, as saying one way of ensuring steady economic growth was "maintaining the basic stability of the yuan at a reasonable level," the newspaper said.

Top Chinese leaders have been sounding warnings against a possible hard landing in the world's fastest growing major economy if overinvestment to red-hot sectors, such as steel, cement and property, is not curbed.

The paper did not elaborate on the yuan, only reiterating long-standing policy on the fixed currency that foreign countries increasingly see as undervalued and a reason Chinese exports are so competitive on world markets.

Speculation has mounted that Beijing may move on the yuan later this year, perhaps pegging it to more currencies than just the dollar or widening its trading band in line with gradual efforts to liberalize its currency.

Some analysts argue such a move would aim to fight mounting inflationary pressures fueled by torrid money supply growth rather than pander to foreign calls for change.

To achieve balanced growth, China would step up reforms to increase agricultural output and boost lagging peasant incomes as well as deepen industrial restructuring and push ahead with financial reform, Zeng said.

The head of the State Development and Reform Commission, Ma Kai, urged that China seek sustainable rather than breakneck growth rates during an annual session of parliament earlier this month.

China's economic growth of 9.1 percent last year had been achieved at the expense of already scarce natural resources, the paper quoted Ma as saying. *Reuters*

EU to impose record fine against Microsoft

BRUSSELS—A European Union decision to fine Microsoft and force it to change how it does business in Europe may upset Microsoft, but is unlikely to threaten EU-US ties as some past decisions have done.

This is in stark contrast to the furor US officials raised three years ago when the EU rejected General Electric's proposed buy of aerospace firm Honeywell International.

The EU rejection marked a low point in transatlantic antitrust cooperation.

A formal decision by European Competition Commissioner Mario Monti on Microsoft is set for Wednesday.

Monti is expected to order the company to offer two versions of its Windows operating system: one with software for audio and video, one without.

The proposed fine of hundreds of millions of euros will be discussed with an EU panel on Monday and announced on Wednesday.

The US response so far to the EU's actions on Microsoft has been subdued. The Justice Department issued a statement last week, which avoided a head-on collision, but expressed a preference to handle matters itself after it negotiated a deal with Microsoft that is supposed to solve competitive problems.

Justice gently prodded the EU last week saying its enforcement in the Microsoft case "provides the appropriate framework for marketplace competition in this important sector."

On the GE-Honeywell case, President George Bush himself backed the deal as pro-competitive, but Monti took a different view and rejected it.

Then Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill denounced the decision as "off the wall" and called Brussels "autocratic."

The EU-US relationship has been volatile over the past two years due to differences over the Iraq war, the fall of the dollar, privacy protection and genetically modified food.

Today, the US antitrust division is headed by R. Hewitt Pate. GE-Honeywell was history when he took over, and the controversial Microsoft remedies package was crafted by his predecessor.

"There are few bright spots in the transatlantic relationship and antitrust policy happens to be one," Monti told reporters earlier this year. "Antitrust and competition policy is a success story of increasing transatlantic convergence."

One reason Microsoft will not change the good relationship between the US and EU is that while the opinion of interested parties was unified in favor of the GE-Honeywell deal, it is split on Microsoft.

Members of the Clinton administration would have made the same decision on GE-Honeywell as those from the Bush administration, experts say and interviews show.

But while political antitrust appointees of the Clinton administration favored the break-up of Microsoft, those in the Bush administration opposed it.

One reason for the divergence is that a number of US companies stand to gain from tough decisions reining in Microsoft's business practices judged illegal in the United States. *Reuters*

Treasury to stop issuing 42-day CMBs

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT will stop issuing 42-day cash management bills (CMBs), saying the debt instrument failed to serve its purpose of strengthening the demand for short-term government securities.

After holding only two 42-day CMB auctions, the last being yesterday's, the Treasury decided not to pursue other scheduled bidding due to weak demand, according to National Treasurer Mina Figueroa.

The 42-day CMB auctions were scheduled to be held every two weeks. They were hoped to boost demand for short-term government securities. Political uncertainties in the light of the election season dampened demand for regular 91-, 182-, and 364-day treasury bills, resulting in increases in the rates offered by banks.

The rate for the 42-day CMBs stood at 7.123 percent in yesterday's auction, or 18.9 basis points lower than the 7.312 percent recorded in the bidding two weeks ago.

Tenders in yesterday's CMB auction reached P4.209 billion, as against the government's offering of P4 billion.

Despite the over-subscription, the auction committee of the Treasury accepted only P1.16 billion worth of bids because of the high rates.

NHMFC to auction off ₱14B in soured loans on May 4

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

UNFAZED by a failed bidding last February, the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp. (NHMFC) will again attempt to sell P14 billion in non-performing loans on May 4.

NHMFC president Angelico Salud told the INQUIRER that the government-led housing agency would accept new applications between March 15 and April 15.

There are at present three investment groups conducting due diligence review of the assets.

NHMFC also plans to invite a local bank to participate in the bidding.

He declined to identify the prospective bidders citing confidentiality agreements.

Among those that earlier expressed interest in NHMFC's idle assets were Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) and First Metro Investment Corp. (FMIC) of the Metrobank Group, sources told the INQUIRER.

Among foreign investment banks that have examined the housing agency's loan books are Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, Lone Star and Lehman Brothers.

Sources said NHMFC was in discussions with prospective investors on issues that blocked efforts to sell the NPLs last month.

There is a possibility that the government will increase its stake in a special purpose entity that will be tasked to restructure highly delinquent loans.

Under the old proposal, once a winning investor is declared, that investor will own 75 percent of the SPE while 25 percent will be held by NHMFC.

NHMFC is considering raising its stake in the SPE to 50 percent and lowering that of the investor to 50 percent.

Under the conditions set by Ernst & Young , some actions that may require NHMFC approval despite its proposed minority or 25 percent interest in the SPE are whether financing can be obtained, whether assets can be pledged and whether massive foreclosures can be executed.

The bidders had problems with certain conditions of the sale. Some wanted to remove the minimum bid price. The NHMFC declined to disclose the minimum bid price.

Also, the Social Security System (SSS) will call on the government's partial guarantee on the delinquent loan accounts should a shortfall of payments happen.

SSS assistant vice president Maribel Ortiz said during an Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines seminar Saturday that the SSS had secured an agreement with the Department of Finance on the guarantee.

Smart offers to buy Piltel debt

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc, the mobile phone company of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., yesterday offered to buy the debt of smaller affiliate Piltel as a step towards acquiring PLDT's 45.3-percent stake in the firm.

Smart said in a statement that it was giving Piltel creditors four weeks or up to April 19 to submit offers to sell the debt.

The company said, in the same statement, that it had presented four options to creditors that would allow Smart to absorb Piltel's obligations such as the following: cash settlement at a discount, conversion into Smart's medium-term dollar loans at a discount, conversion into a 10-year debt of Smart, or a swap with sovereign dollar bonds held by Smart.

Smart said it would proceed with the debt conversion only if 75 percent of the creditors would agree to any of the options offered.

"Should Smart acquire PLDT's interest in Piltel, it is not Smart's intention to enter into a legal statutory merger with Piltel nor does it intend to use Piltel as a backdoor listing vehicle," said Smart in a statement.

In one of the options, Piltel's obligation will be swapped with Smart's 12-year, sovereign-guaranteed bonds with a 2 percent annual coupon rate or a 10-year debt maturing in 2014 with fixed-interest at 2.25 percent per year.

The other options require Piltel creditors to take a haircut, a term used when the restructuring would involve losses on the part of creditors. One of the proposals is the settlement in cash of roughly $400 million in dollar-denominated debt of Piltel at a discount of $0.60 per dollar.

The other is swapping the obligation with Smart debts maturing in 2007 or 2008 at the rate of $0.525 and P0.575, or at discounts of of $0.475 and $0.425, respectively, but with an interest of Libor plus 1 percentage point payable quarterly.

For Piltel supplier Marubeni, Smart offered to convert Piltel's debt into a 10-year debt maturing in 2014, also with a fixed interest of 2.25 percent per year but with an option to be paid either in December 2007 or December 2008 with the same 47.5 US centavo and 42.5 US centavo discount.

PLDT owns all of mobile leader Smart Communications Inc.

Piltel had net losses of P3.35 billion last year and P21.83 billion in 2002.

Investors have been hoping for a merger between Smart and Piltel, which together hold 57 percent of the lucrative but only partially penetrated local mobile market. PLDT's chief rival, Globe Telecom Inc., has a 40-percent market share.

Co-ops back NEA restructuring

LEADERS of the country's rural electric cooperatives recently lauded the restructuring of the National Electrification Administration (NEA), saying the move "created a more efficient organization that is more responsive to the needs of its constituencies."

The co-op leaders said the "leaner and meaner NEA" was expected to provide better technical support since it would do away with a tedious internal process.

Among the rural co-op leaders who expressed support for the new NEA are the general managers of the different electric cooperatives in the country including Jesus Castro of Zamboanga del Sur Electric Co-op., Carlos Itable of Bohol Electric Co-op., Wilfred Billena of Iloilo I Electric Co-op and Eric Bucoy of Aklan Electric Co-op.

They said the restructuring would also save the government millions of pesos in manpower and administrative costs, which could be better used for developmental projects.

NEA had restructured in line with the provisions of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act, which was signed into law in 2001.

NEA Administrator Edith Bueno earlier said the new structure "is the result of two years of consultative and highly-participative processes involving all employees of NEA".

Bueno said the new structure, which was supported by NEA's 17 employee organization, now has only about 400 manpower complement, down from about 800 under the previous set-up.

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late RIZALINO V. FRIAS, JR an extrajudicial deed of partition and settlement among heirs with waiver of rights was executed and denominated as per Doc. No. 271; Page No. 55; Book No. 398; Series of 2004 Notarized by Lucila M. Lawas of Yutok Pasig City
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INVITATION TO REGISTER AND TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR TRUCKING/HAULING SERVICES FOR NFA-NCR

The National Food Authority, National Capital Region, U.N. Avenue, Paco, Manila invites all interested qualified Trucking/Hauling Services Contractors to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for the hauling of 157,000 MT, more or less, of NFA imported rice from the NFA designated unloading terminals (South/North Harbor) to the different NFA-NCR warehouses located in Manila, Rizal and Cavite, with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of Php27,168,200.00).

Application forms and list of requirements for registration may be secured from the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of a letter of intent and after payment of a non-refundable/non-transferable registration fee of P2,000.00.

Only applicants with Certificate of Official Registration as NFA Trucking/Hauling Services Contractors issued by NFA-NCR RBAC may apply for eligibility and to bid for NCR Trucking/Hauling Services.

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Application for Registration/Requirements	– March 23, 2004 to March 30, 2004	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2. Deadline for Submission of Registration Requirements	– April 1, 2004	5:00 PM
3. Issuance of Certificate of Official Registration	– March 23, 2004 to April 2, 2004	
4. Issuance of application for Eligibility / Requirements	– March 23, 2004 to April 2, 2004	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
5. Pre-Bidding Conference	– April 1, 2004	10:00 AM
6. Bidding Proper	– April 14, 2004	9:00 AM

The Application Forms to bid and list of requirements for eligibility may be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the Office of the Assistant Regional Director, NFA-NCR, UN Avenue, Paco, Manila with telephone numbers 563-94-37 and 564-20-71 to 74 local 111.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. BASILIDES TACO**
Assistant Regional Director
Chairman, Bidding Committee

(PDI – March 23 & 29, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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(In Compliance with R.A. 7041)

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
CENTER FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT NO. 4-A
QMMC Compound, Project 4, Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Center for Health Development No. 4-A, QMMC Compound, Project 4, Quezon City, will conduct Public Bidding on the following schedule:

PRE-BID CONFERENCE
A. DRUGS AND MEDICINES – April 12, 2004 (10 a.m.)
B. MEDICAL, DENTAL and INSECTICIDES SUPPLIES – April 13, 2004 (10 a.m.)
C. COMPUTER SUPPLIES – April 14, 2004 (10 a.m.)

SUBMISSION OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The requirement for eligibility of prospective bidders must be personally submitted to CHD 4-A, Supply Management Section by the duly authorized representative not later than **April 21, 2004 at 12:00 p.m.**

OPENING OF BIDS
A. DRUGS AND MEDICINES – May 3, 2004 (10 a.m.)
(Approved G.O.P. Budget Based on APMP – P2.2 M)
B. MEDICAL, DENTAL and INSECTICIDES SUPPLIES – May 4, 2004 (10 a.m.)
(Approved G.O.P. Budget Based on APMP – P2.6 M)
C. COMPUTER SUPPLIES – May 5, 2004 (10 a.m.)
(Approved G.O.P. Budget Based on APMP & Continuing Appropriation – P2.9 M)

The Bids and Awards Committee reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive any defects or formally therein and accept bids considered complying and most advantageous to the government.

For further inquiries, please contact Mr. Moises A Peralta Jr. – Supply Officer III with Tel. Nos. 913-45-27 & 913-46-82

(Sgd.) **ASUNCION M. ANDEN, MD., MPH, CESO III**
BAC Chairperson

(PDI-March 23, 2004)

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1. **Nissan Altima**
   Dark Green
   95 Model, Twin Cam, 16 Valve
   P170T only
2. **Nissan Vanette**
   White
   95 Model, All Power
   P150T only

For inquiries, call or text Fresier Sison
0917-5181003

NOTICE

Members of St. Michael The Archangel Multi-purpose Cooperative are invited to attend its General Assembly and Election of Officers on March 27, 2004 at St. Michael Charismatic Hall, Bacoor, Cavite at 8:00 in the morning.

DAEWOO AND NISSAN BUSES FOR SALE!
For inquiries and further details, please call Mr. Ed Cruz at (0917) 822 0270.

POEA
24-HR HOTLINES
722-1144 • 722-1155

DOGS FOR SALE

BELGIAN MALLINOIS
adult, proven for breeding
5 female, 2 male
BOXER
adult, proven for breeding
2 female, 1 male
AM-BULL
puppies, complete shots
2 female, 2 male
Look for Boy Lee 9413242

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PNB

PUBLIC BIDDING
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.	Location	:	In front of MAKRO along Quirino Highway Barangay Talipapa, Quezon City
2.	Land Area	:	38,000 square meters, more or less
3.	Floor Price	:	P7,000.00 per square meter
4.	Turnover Condition	:	"As is – Where is"
5.	Development	:	Commercial Mall Development
6.	Floor Area	:	Development area shall have a minimum built-up Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 50,000 square meters, or equivalent Floor-Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.31
7.	Timetable	:	a) Construction shall commence within three (3) years upon receipt by the Winning Bidder of the Notice of Approval b) Commercial operation shall commence within five (5) years upon receipt by the Winning Bidder of the Notice of Approval
8.	Development Cost	:	Minimum appraised value of development for commercial mall shall be P800.00 Million
9.	Right-of-Way	:	a) Provision of a perpetual 20 meter Right-of-Way (ROW) (included in purchased area) for back portion of property b) Road construction and site development for ROW area shall be for the account of the Winning Bidder, to be completed within one (1) year upon receipt of Notice of Approval
10.	Taxes	:	PNB shall be responsible for the payment of the capital gains tax (if any) and creditable withholding tax up to the approved selling price only, and any excess shall be for the account of the Winning Bidder. All other expenses such as VAT (if any), documentary stamp tax, transfer tax, registration fees and other fees which is related in the transfer of title in the name of the Winning Bidder shall be for the exclusive account of the Winning Bidder
11.	Bid Evaluation/Award	:	a) PNB reserves the right to reject any or all bids at its sole discretion, waive any defect/s or informality on the bids received and accept the bid most advantageous to PNB, but does not guarantee that any award shall be made. b) PNB's decision is final and binding to the Winning Bidder. No withdrawal of bids shall be allowed once the winning bid has been selected and approved by PNB. Any withdrawal of bid by Winning Bidder shall result to forfeiture by PNB of deposit made. c) PNB reserves the right to withdraw the offered property at any time before the deadline of submission of offers for any purpose. d) PNB does not assume any obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify any bidder for any expense that may be incurred in the bidding process
12.	Submission Procedure	:	Submit **sealed offer** to buy accompanied by a no interest-bearing deposit of at least 10% of the offered purchase price in the form of Cashier's / Manager's Check payable to **PHILIPPINE NATIONAL BANK.** The sealed offer must be labeled **COMMERCIAL SALE.** Sealed offer and check payment for deposit must be submitted not later than **3:00 p.m., April 30, 2004** to : **Jonathan F. Caro** Senior Assistant Vice-President **Asset Management Group** 9th Floor, PNB Financial Center Pres. Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. Pasay City, Metro Manila All submitted bids shall be opened in view of the bidders immediately after the deadline on **April 30, 2004** at the office of Asset Management Group at the 9th Floor, PNB Financial Center.

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Cebu

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Cebu, thru its bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites all interested manufacturers, suppliers, dealers and/or distributors to apply for eligibility and to submit bids for the supply of various food requirements of jail prisoners at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center (PDRC) for the period of six (6) months starting **May 1, 2004** to **October 31, 2004**, with an approved budget of Php 4,637,336.00.

In order to qualify for participation in the public bidding, the bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Section 23.6 of the approved IRR-A of Republic Act No. 9184.

Eligibility requirements and bid forms, tender documents and request for quotation shall be available at the BAC Secretariat, Provincial General Services Office, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City, within the government prescribed office hours, starting on Tuesday, **March 23, 2004**, upon payment of non-refundable fee of One Hundred Pesos Only (Php 100.00)

Pre-bid conference will be conducted on Wednesday, **March 31, 2004**, 2:00 p.m., at the BAC conference room, Provincial General Services Office, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

Sealed envelopes containing the duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals shall be received by the BAC Secretariat at the above mentioned address not later than 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, **April 12, 2004**, and shall be publicly opened thereafter.

All particulars relative to the eligibility process, bidding, evaluation of bids, post-qualification and award of contract shall be governed by the implementing Rules and regulations (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

The Bids and Awards Committee of the Province of Cebu reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects or formality therein and to accept bids considered complying, responsive and most advantageous to the government.

For inquiry, please contact the office of the BAC Secretariat at Telephone Nos.253-9614, 253-3995 and 416-6065.

These requirements are posted at the BAC Bulletin Board, PGSO, DepEd Bldg., Capitol, Cebu City.

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. HABIN
Chairman

(PDI- March 23 & 29, 2004)

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PUBLIC AUCTION

MARCH 31, 2004 • WEDNESDAY • 2:00 p.m.
FUNCTION ROOM B • LA MAJA RICA HOTEL
McARTHUR HIGHWAY • TARLAC CITY

MONCADA

Lot 1 - LOT ONLY
LA 314sqm
LOT 1899-A, ALONG MCARTHUR HIGHWAY, BRGY.LAPSING
Min. Bid Price PhP**120,000.00**

Lot 2 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,727sqm
LOTS 1904-A & 1904-B, BRGY. LAPSING
Min. Bid Price PhP**220,000.00**

Lot 3 - LOT ONLY
LA 5,297sqm
LOT 2141-E, ALONG McARTHUR HIWAY, BRGY. MABINI
Min. Bid Price PhP**557,000.00**

Lot 4 - LOT ONLY
LA 456sqm
LOT 917-B, LUNA ST., PUROK 3, CAMPOSANTO 1, POBLACION
Min. Bid Price PhP**155,000.00**

PANIQUI

Lot 5 - LOT ONLY
LA 224sqm
LOT 3407-A-7-A, INTERIOR LOT, BRGY. CORAL
Min. Bid Price PhP**34,000.00**

Lot 6 - LOT ONLY
LA 300sqm
LOT 3407-B-2-G-2, INTERIOR LOT, BRGY. CORAL
Min. Bid Price PhP**45,000.00**

Lot 7 - LOT ONLY
LA 245sqm
LOT 3404-B-1-8-3, BRGY. CORAL
Min. Bid Price PhP**84,000.00**

Lot 8 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 165sqm FA 61sqm
LOT 3283-C-2, #235 INTERIOR, BRGY. CORAL
Min. Bid Price PhP**170,000.00**

Lot 9 - LOT ONLY
LA 629sqm
LOT 4413-C, BRGY., MATALAPITAP
Min. Bid Price PhP**118,000.00**

Lot 10 - LOT ONLY
LA 251sqm
LOT 4876-C-6, BRGY., MATALAPITAP
Min. Bid Price PhP**54,000.00**

Lot 11 - LOT ONLY
LA 251sqm
LOT 4876-C-5, BRGY. MATALAPITAP
Min. Bid Price PhP**54,000.00**

Lot 12 - LOT ONLY
LA 212sqm
LOT 4474-J, #12, BRGY. CANAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**64,000.00**

Lot 13 - LOT ONLY
LA 492sqm
LOT P-2, PATALAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**84,000.00**

Lot 14 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 492sqm FA 68sqm
LOT P-3, PATALAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**95,000.00**

Lot 15 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 200sqm FA 110sqm
LOT 4153-F-4, #1040 INTERIOR BURGOS ST.
Min. Bid Price PhP**128,000.00**

Lot 16 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 2,485sqm FA 111sqm
LOT 2439-B, BRGY. COLIBANGBANG
Min. Bid Price PhP**165,000.00**

Lot 17 - LOT ONLY
LA 6,492sqm
LOT [illegible] CO
Min. Bid Price PhP**347,000.00**
WITHDRAWN

Lot 18 - LOT ONLY
LA 722sqm
LOT 4120-D, M. H. DEL PILAR ST.(MCARTHUR HIWAY), BRGY. ESTACION
Min. Bid Price PhP**430,000.00**

Lot 19 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 334sqm FA 102sqm
NO. 433 LACAYANGA SUBD., BRGY. CAYANGA
Min. Bid Price PhP**710,000.00**

GERONA

Lot 20 - LOT ONLY
LA 500sqm
LOT 4826-B-2-C-3, CALAYAAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**48,000.00**

Lot 21 - LOT ONLY
LA 500sqm
LOT 4826-B-2-C-4, BRGY CALAYAAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**48,000.00**

Lot 22 - LOT ONLY
LA 400sqm
LOT 4-C-9-A-8, BRGY. PARSOLINGAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**102,000.00**

Lot 23 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 940sqm FA 90sqm
LOT 4489-C, PUROK TALNA, BRGY. TAGUMBAO
Min. Bid Price PhP**133,000.00**

Lot 24 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 219sqm FA 73sqm
LOT 2512-C-3-G, # 53 CALLE MABINI (INTERIOR), POBLACION 1
Min. Bid Price PhP**266,000.00**

Lot 25 - LOT ONLY
LA 6,218sqm
LOT 1090-J, BARANGAY SINGAT
Min. Bid Price PhP**317,000.00**

Lot 26 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 17,010sqm FA (various)
LOTS 298-A-2 & 309, OLD PROV'L. RD BRGY. LUNA
Min. Bid Price PhP**2,849,000.00**

RAMOS

Lot 27 - LOT ONLY
LA 349sqm
LOT 3-D, POBLACION NORTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**22,000.00**

Lot 28 - LOT ONLY
LA 624sqm
LOT 3-C-2, POBLACION NORTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**40,000.00**

Lot 29 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 3,067sqm FA 33sqm
LOT 379 A-1, MUNICIPAL ROAD, POB NORTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**737,000.00**

PURA

Lot 30 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 357sqm FA 58sqm
LOT 915-A, POBLACION 1
Min. Bid Price PhP**164,000.00**

VICTORIA

Lot 31 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,166sqm
LOT 1474, COR. IPIL IPIL & BRGY. ROAD, CALIBUNGAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**100,000.00**

Lot 32 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 141sqm FA 88sqm
LOT 2402-A-5, SAN AMBROSIO ST., SAN GAVINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**122,000.00**

Lot 33 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,000sqm
LOTS 1 & 2, RAIZ ST., SAN FERNANDO
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,289,000.00**

Lot 34 - LOT ONLY
LA 16,00[illegible]
LOT [illegible] SCO
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,896,000.00**
WITHDRAWN

Lot 35 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 20,617sqm FA 4698sqm
LOTS 681-A, 681-B, 681-C & 681-D, ALONG VICTORIA-PURA PROVINCIAL ROAD, BRGY. BANGAR
Min. Bid Price PhP**2,988,000.00**

LAPAZ

Lot 36 - LOT ONLY
LA 585sqm
LOT 3 BLK 1, SNR. DE LA PAZ SUBD., SAN ISIDRO
Min. Bid Price PhP**100,000.00**

Lot 37 - LOT ONLY
LA 656sqm
LOT 2 BLK 3, SNR. DE LA PAZ SUBD., SAN ISIDRO
Min. Bid Price PhP**112,000.00**

Lot 38 - LOT ONLY
LA 652sqm
LOT 1 BL[illegible] SUBD., SAN[illegible]
Min. Bid Price PhP**139,000.00**
WITHDRAWN

Lot 39 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 800sqm FA 78sqm
LOT 3 BLK 16, #447 SONZA AVE., BRGY. COMILLAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**150,000.00**

Lot 40 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 763sqm FA 202sqm
LOT 9 BLK 24, SONZA ST., COMILLAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**187,000.00**

Lot 41 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 800sqm FA 146sqm
LOT 7 BLK 10, SONZA AVE., BRGY. COMILLAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**390,000.00**

Lot 42 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,196sqm FA 48sqm
LOT 9 BLK 23, SONZA ST., BRGY. COMILLAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**476,000.00**

Lot 43 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,389sqm
LOT 2067, BRGY. MATAYUMTAYUM
Min. Bid Price PhP**163,000.00**

Lot 44 - LOT ONLY
LA 3,228sqm
LOT 2068, BRGY. MATAYUMTAYUM
Min. Bid Price PhP**220,000.00**

Lot 45 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 789sqm FA 115sqm
LOT 2301-A, BRGY. MATAYUMTAYUM
Min. Bid Price PhP**314,000.00**

CONCEPCION

Lot 46 - LOT ONLY
LA 3,293sqm
LOT 1 BLK 6, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**173,000.00**

Lot 47 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,148sqm
LOT 128-A-6, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**586,000.00**

Lot 48 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,670sqm
LOT 1 BLK 1, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO. NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**752,000.00**

Lot 49 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,982sqm
LOT 3 BLK 3, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**892,000.00**

Lot 50 - LOT ONLY
LA 18,475sqm
LOT 128-A-7, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**943,000.00**

Lot 51 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,385sqm
LOT 4 BLK 3, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,074,000.00**

Lot 52 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,439sqm
LOT 2 BLK 1, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,098,000.00**

Lot 53 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,496sqm
LOT 3 BLK 1, PINEDA ORCHARD, BRGY. STO. NINO
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,123,000.00**

CAPAS

Lot 54 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,306sqm
LOT 3-C-3, MANIPON CMPD., STO DOMINGO, CAPAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**399,000.00**

SAN JOSE

Lot 55- LOT ONLY
LA 1,606sqm
LOT 19-A, BRGY., LAWACAMULAG
Min. Bid Price PhP**168,000.00**

Lot 56- LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,004sqm FA 75sqm
LOT 6035-A, BRGY., VILLA AGLIPAY
Min. Bid Price PhP**258,000.00**

TARLAC CITY

Lot 57 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 210sqm
LOT 4019-A-1, INTERIOR ESPINOSA ST., BRGY. SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**84,000.00**

Lot 58 - LOT ONLY
LA 535sqm
LOT 52, SITIO KUMINTANG, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**137,000.00**

Lot 59 - LOT ONLY
LA 540sqm
LOT 53, SITIO KUMINTANG, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**138,000.00**

Lot 60 - LOT ONLY
LA 550sqm
LOT 54, SITIO KUMINTANG, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**141,000.00**

Lot 61 - LOT ONLY
LA 367sqm
L12, BLK 5, BRGY. AGUSO, STA CRUZ
Min. Bid Price PhP**63,000.00**

Lot 62 - LOT ONLY
LA 367sqm
L14, BLK 5, BRGY. AGUSO, STA CRUZ
Min. Bid Price PhP**63,000.00**

Lot 63 - LOT ONLY
LA 202sqm
LOT 10 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**69,000.00**

Lot 64 - LOT ONLY
LA 203sqm
LOT 16 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**69,000.00**

Lot 65 - LOT ONLY
LA 206sqm
LOT 8 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**70,000.00**

Lot 66 - LOT ONLY
LA 204sqm
LOT 9 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**70,000.00**

Lot 67 - LOT ONLY
LA 205sqm
LOT 17 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**70,000.00**

Lot 68 - LOT ONLY
LA 207sqm
LOT 11 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**71,000.00**

Lot 69 - LOT ONLY
LA 208sqm
LOT 15 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**71,000.00**

Lot 70 - LOT ONLY
LA 207sqm
LOT 18 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**71,000.00**

Lot 71 - LOT ONLY
LA 208sqm
LOT 19 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**71,000.00**

Lot 72 - LOT ONLY
LA 237sqm
LOT 13 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**81,000.00**

Lot 73 - LOT ONLY
LA 228sqm
LOT 14 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**88,000.00**

Lot 74 - LOT ONLY
LA 231sqm
LOT 12 BLK 18, OUR LADY OF RANSOM SUBD., MATATALAIB
Min. Bid Price PhP**89,000.00**

Lot 75 - LOT ONLY
LA 768sqm
LOT 12 BLK 4, SALVADOR SUBD., SITIO MALIGAYA, BRGY. AGUSO
Min. Bid Price PhP**131,000.00**

Lot 76 - LOT ONLY
LA 789sqm
LOT 13 BLK 4, SALVADOR SUBD., SITIO MALIGAYA, BRGY. AGUSO
Min. Bid Price PhP**135,000.00**

Lot 77 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,000sqm FA 63sqm
LOT 5-A-A, BRGY. STO. NINO, TARLAC
Min. Bid Price PhP**181,000.00**

Lot 78 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,220sqm
LOT 4808, SAN JUAN DE MATA
Min. Bid Price PhP**124,000.00**

Lot 79 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 585sqm FA 74sqm
LOT 4792-B-1, BRGY. SAN JUAN DE MATA
Min. Bid Price PhP**157,000.00**

Lot 80 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,014sqm
LOT 5, BRGY. SAN JUAN DE MATA
Min. Bid Price PhP**191,000.00**

Lot 81 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 515sqm FA 66sqm
LOT 4831-C, PUROK HAPPY VALLEY, SAN JUAN DE MATA
Min. Bid Price PhP**200,000.00**

Lot 82 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,703sqm
LOTS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 4790-B, BRGY. SAN JUAN DE MATA
Min. Bid Price PhP**290,000.00**

Lot 83 - LOT ONLY
LA 13,633sqm
LOT 5, BRGY. STA. CRUZ
Min. Bid Price PhP**409,000.00**

Lot 84 - LOT ONLY
LA 344sqm
LOT 43, MACARTHUR HIWAY, STA. CRUZ
Min. Bid Price PhP**205,000.00**

Lot 85 - LOT ONLY
LA 240sqm
LOT 43-B, SAN VICENTE HILLS SUBD., SAN VICENTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**252,000.00**

Lot 86 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 188sqm FA 88sqm
LOT 18 BLK 3, CADENA DE AMOR ST., CAPITOL SUBD. SAN VICENTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**350,000.00**

Lot 87 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 240sqm FA 150sqm
LOT 1 BLK 8, FAIRLANE SUBD., SAN VICENTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**452,000.00**

Lot 88 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 622sqm FA 70sqm
LOTS 43-C & 43-D, SAN VICENTE HILLS SUBD., SAN VICENTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**515,000.00**

Lot 89 - LOT ONLY
LA 851sqm
LOTS 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11, BLOCK 1, BRGY. SAN VICENTE
Min. Bid Price PhP**798,000.00**

Lot 90 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,025sqm
LOT 108-A, SITIO KUMINTANG, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**262,000.00**

Lot 91 - LOT ONLY
LA 6,918sqm
LOT 9370-A, PUROK 6, SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**370,000.00**

Lot 92 - LOT ONLY
LA 1,426sqm
LOT 4033, PARAISO COR MEDINA STS., SAPANG MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**375,000.00**

Lot 93 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 606sqm FA 185sqm
LOTS 3992-B & 3992-C, BRGY SAPANG. MARAGUL
Min. Bid Price PhP**804,000.00**

Lot 94 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 240sqm FA 38sqm
LOT 7 BLK 11, BACUIT, SAPANG MARAGUL, TARLAC
Min. Bid Price PhP**47,000.00**

Lot 95 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,306sqm FA 108sqm
LOT 3135-C, # 204 & 205, BRGY. ALVINDIA
Min. Bid Price PhP**416,000.00**

Lot 96 - LOT ONLY
LA 302sqm
LOT 23 BLK 1, WALING WALING ST., LAZATIN SUBDIVISION, SAN ROQUE
Min. Bid Price PhP**431,000.00**

Lot 97 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 538sqm FA 180sqm
LOT 13 BLK 6, 424 3RD STREET, PARADISE SUBD., SAN ROQUE
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,617,000.00**

Lot 98 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 978sqm FA 25sqm
LOT 9 BLK 2, ALONG ROMULO HIWAY.
Min. Bid Price PhP**452,000.00**

Lot 99 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 4,685sqm FA (various)
LOTS 1-A-2, 1-A-3, 1-A-4, 1-A-3-B & 1068-A, ROMULO HIWAY, POB. EAST, STA IGNACIA
Min. Bid Price PhP**3,522,000.00**

Lot 100 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 270sqm F[illegible]
LOT [illegible] CA[illegible]
Min. Bid Price PhP**492,000.00**
WITHDRAWN

Lot 101 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 224sqm FA 144sqm
LOT A, BLK 1, BRGY. SAN MANUEL
Min. Bid Price PhP**500,000.00**

Lot 102 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 240sqm FA 68sqm
LOT 7 BLK 53, SAN SEBASTIAN VILLAGE, PHASE III, BINAUGANAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**606,000.00**

Lot 103 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 4,176sqm FA 140sqm
LOT 2-B-3, SITIO MOLAVE, BRGY. SAN ISIDRO
Min. Bid Price PhP**863,000.00**

Lot 104 - LOT ONLY
LA 194sqm
LOT 484, #822 F. TANEDO ST., SAN NICOLAS
Min. Bid Price PhP**2,969,000.00**

Lot 105 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 1,591sqm FA 32sqm
LOT 2, MAC ARTHUR HIWAY, SAN RAFAEL
Min. Bid Price PhP**7,196,000.00**

Lot 106 - LOT ONLY
LA 2,732sqm
LOT 2-F-1-E, HAPPY HILLS SUBD., CARANGIAN
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,025,000.00**

Lot 107 - LOT & IMPRVMNT
LA 345sqm FA 214sqm
LOT 1, #0576 / 439, PROVINCIAL ROAD, ARANGUREN
Min. Bid Price PhP**1,176,000.00**

Lot 108 - LOT ONLY
LA 5,860sqm
LOTS 2576-B-2-A, C & B, MCARTHUR HIGHWAY, SEPUNG CALSADA
Min. Bid Price PhP**5,922,000.00**

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Pinoy Skills and Experience in big demand in the developing world.

OVER the coming three months, a small but significant band of Filipino men and women will join others like them all over the developing world through an initiative of VSO Bahaginan.

These men and women will work in places as far apart as Mongolia, Macedonia and Maldives, and will travel to far-flung countries, such as Ghana, Gambia and Guyana. Once out there, they will work in partnership with local community-based organizations to share the skills in capacity building, organizational development, micro-credit, livelihoods development, natural resources management, and community health care, among many others.

The unique contribution of Filipinos to the developing world is being recognized, as more and more Filipino professionals join their ranks.

VSO volunteers work within communities in Africa, Asia, the Balkans and the Caribbean/Pacific region, sharing their professional skills and experience with local people. They exchange ideas so that together, they can find lasting solutions to the problems local people face. It's a unique approach that helps some of the world's most disadvantaged people change their lives. VSO Bahaginan offers a unique opportunity for Filipino professionals to share their skills with people of other developing countries and join in this worthy endeavor.

More than 70 Filipino VSO volunteers are currently in service overseas and about 60 more adds to this figure every year as VSO Bahaginan continues to send out qualified applicants every year. Most placements are for a two-year period and provide an enabling environment in which a volunteer can build relationships and work effectively, while serving the needs of the disadvantage, such as the poor, physically weak, vulnerable and marginalized groups.

In the same manner that Filipino professionals are sent overseas as volunteers, the Philippines has also been a recipient of expatriate volunteers through the VSO Philippines Programme Office since 1968. VSO, in its aim to promote volunteering to fight global poverty and disadvantage, has been recruiting volunteers internationally to work in more than 30 countries in the developing world.

VSO is an international development organization that works through *and with* volunteers. Its recruitment started in 1958 mostly in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada. Recognizing the skills and knowledge available in the developing world, it has expanded its recruitment to include developing countries, such as Kenya, India and the Philippines. This development has led to the establishment of VSO *Bahaginan* in 2000.

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I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

We will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in our mouth.
Psalm 34:1

MARCIAL DEL ESPIRITU SANTO ESTAGLE

Born on July 19, 1951
Has joined his Creator on 21 March 2004

His beloved wife **Agnes**; children **Chino** and **Chinie**; brother **Joey** and sisters **Tellie**, **Marcia** and **Tina** ask the pious readers to join them in praising God for Chelin for he made us see a glimpse of God's sometimes quiet, sometimes hilarious yet constantly strong loving presence.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Parañaque City. A mass of the resurrection will be held on Wednesday, 24 March 2004, 8:00 p.m.

Cremation will be on Thursday, 25 March 2004, 8:00 a.m. at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels Crematorium.

"Only goodness and love will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the Lord for the years to come ...." Psalm 23:6

God has called our beloved Mommy home

LYDIA FERNANDEZ MAMENTA

of Binalonan, Tayug Pangasinan, and Quezon City
Peacefully died on March 21, 2004 at the age of 74.

Her loving children **MARILOU YUMUL, JONGJONG** & **TONI** (Nee **TONI M. SISON**); grandchildren **ARCHIE**, **KRISTINE**, **MICHELLE**, **REGGIE**, **KATRINA** & **SOFIA**, brother, sisters, uncles, aunties, nephews, nieces, in-laws and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City. She will be brought home to Luna College Tayug, Pangasinan on March 24, 2004.

Interment will be on Sunday, March 28, 2004 at Tayug Cemetery, Pangasinan after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick Church.

ELIZABETH KRAFT FORÉS

Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord on March 20, 2004 at the age of 82.

Her bereaved family, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels in Guadalupe, Makati City.

Cremation will be on March 24, 2004 at 4:00 in the afternoon.

"What I gave, I had. What I kept, I lost. When I die, I will leave behind everything I kept, and only those I gave away shall I bring with me to heaven."

A very wise man of the cloth

The Shareholders, Board of Directors,
Management and Staff of
The Rural Bank of San Mateo (Isabela), Inc.

deeply mourns the passing of

ENGR. ROMULO A. PETINES, SR.

its beloved Founding Chairman, who peacefully joined his Creator on March 20, 2004 at the age of 92.

A Requiem Mass will be held 8:00 A.M. Tuesday, March 23, at the Petines Family residence in 52 Times Street, Diliman, Quezon City. Interment will follow at the family mausoleum in Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

CARLO PATRICCI D. PASCUAL

March 18, 1977 - March 21, 2004

Was called home by the Lord.

His beloved parents **Romy** (†) and **Ester**; brothers and sisters-in-law **Arvi** and **Tessa Banal** and **Gep** and **Trisha dela Fuente**; and nephews **Rovi, Rafael, Ro-P** and niece **Andie**, uncles and aunties and other relatives request prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Mary Memorial Chapel, Cutcut, Angeles City.

Interment will be on March 24, 2004, Wednesday at the Eternal Memorial Park, San Sebastian, Tarlac City after the morning mass.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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DR. DANTE C. LLAPITAN

Former Sr. Vice President of United Laboratories, Inc.

Died in the Grace of our Lord on March 21, 2004 at the age of 77.

His body lies in state at St. Francis Chapel, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati. Interment will be after the 9:00 mass on March 24 at South Cemetery.

Always caring...
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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Globe supports government, NGO info campaigns

AFTER successfully bringing Filipinos from different parts of the Philippine archipelago together through its innovative digital mobile communications and SMS, Globe continues to make its mark on the lives of many of its subscribers by putting its resources to use in support of different socio-civic initiatives by various government agencies and non-government organizations.

"Electronic mobile governance puts people at an advantage by bringing government agencies within their reach. Now they can conveniently access these agencies and their services with just a few clicks on their cellphones. This SMS-based service also enables people to be pro-active in their social and civic duties by involving them in such government initiatives like tax collection and the fight against drugs and crime," said Globe head of wireless business group Ferdz De La Cruz.

Even Malacañang Palace has partnered with Globe to open a direct communication channel to President Arroyo. This service empowers people with the means of connecting with the president, allowing them to text their concerns, requests and feedback on her performance, just by keying in 'TXT GMA' on their mobile phones. To text the president just type TXT GMA <your message> and send to 09178398462.

Workers curious about the status of their SSS and GSIS contributions, may now also access information via SMS on their Globe Handyphones. To inquire about total SSS contributions, type SSS <space> CONTRI <space> SSS number <space> birthdate (mmddyy) and send to # 2931. To get your salary loan status type SSS <space> SALSTAT <space> SSS number <space> birthdate (mmddyy) and send to 2931. Information on your salary loan period may be accessed simply by typing SSS <space> LPERIOD <space> SSS number <space> birthdate (mmddyy) and send to 2931.

Also, government employees can now also inquire about their loan balance, status of individual loan application and their maximum loanable amount from their Globe Handyphone. To access all these information, register in the program by texting the following keyword GSIS REG <space> policy number <space> last name <space> first name <space> and send to 2390. Inquire what your maximum loan able amount is by texting the keyword GSIS SLAMT and sending to 2390. Information about salary loan balance can be obtained by keying in GSIS SLBAL and sending to 2390. Find out the status of GSIS loans by typing the keywords GSIS <space> SLSTAT and sending to 2390.

Another government agency providing valuable virtual mobile service to overseas Filipino workers (OFW) and their relatives is the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). This service allows subscribers to have their passport application process, as well as provide a directory of Philippine embassies and get updates on critical situations abroad through their Globe Handyphone. To receive instructions on how to avail of all these services, just type the keyword TXT DFA and send to 29762. To post inquiries about the latest update on global hotspots such as Iraq, type the keyword ASK <space> Message and send to 29762. To place comments and suggestions type the keyword ASK <space> UR <space> message and send to 29762.

Dole Job Hunt is a mobile job search designed to let all registered applicants access pre-qualified job matches through text. Conversely, accredited employers can likewise post their job openings via SMS. To register: type DOLE REG <space> last name first name middle name <space> birthdate (mmddyy) and send to 2336. The system will then send a personal ID number which you will use in your job search. To check job match type DOLE MATCH <space> ID number and send to 2336.

An array of Globe powered SMS services function as an indispensable tool to help the government step up its ongoing campaign for a safe and drug free Philippines.

NOKIA
Contacts
GMA
SSS
117
NAPOLCOM
NTC
DFA
GSIS
DOLE JOB HUNT
Options
Back

To report crimes, type your SMS message and send to 117 or to the National Police Commission by typing the keyword NAPOLCOM <space> COMPLAINT <space> message and then send to 2333. Text messages or tips leading to the arrest of drug pushers or users to can be reported to Kill Droga by texting the keyword KD REPORT <space> message to 2971.

Cellphone snatching is a pretty common occurrence in some parts of the country. Eliminate phone theft by registering your Globe Handyphone to the NTC hotline by typing the keyword REG <space> cellphone number <space> IMEI number <space> preferred PIN code and send to 682.

Globe E-governance takes SMS to new, more relevant level. It is now more than a connectivity device but an important tool for restoring the faith and trust of the people on the government and its agencies.

THE SOSY VENTURE OF ARIEL & MAVERICK

The misadventures lead into a 15-month venture with A. Tung Chingco Trading, Inc. (the maker of Ligo Sardines). Comedians Ariel, Maverick and Mommy Elvie (Elvira Villasanta) of the popular ABC 5 show 'The Misadventures of Ariel and Maverick' signed a contract last March 1, in Katipunan Ave., Quezon City. Present at the signing were Ariel & Maverick and Adformatix Inc as representatives of Ligo Sardines.

KALAHI AWARDING

Hope shone on the conflicted areas in Victoria, Oriental Mindoro when Brgy Capt. Osias Largado (in white shirt) and six other barangays received financial assistance for their poverty alleviation projects from President Macapagal-Arroyo's social fund through the National Anti-Poverty Commission as part of the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Kalahi) program. Handing the check is presidential assistant Alfredo Abueg Jr. of Regional Development (Mimaropa) and NAPC acting lead convenor Sec. Veronica Villavicencio with Mayor Alfredo Ortega looking on.

Life and leisure from Landco

PROPERTY Developer Landco Pacific Corporation has made quite a reputation as a leading property developer of second homes and resorts outside Manila-Punta Fuego, Stonecrest, and Canyon Woods, to name a few. Leisure Farms, the most recent, all started with Landco's response to a need among middle-aged city folk, a longing for a fresh change in lifestyle and a deeper interaction with nature.

Ironically what Leisure Farms has, which is not present in all the other resort projects, is you're engaged in some kind of work-farming and gardening. To discover leisure, you get to work, intimately with nature. And it works: there's now not just one but two Leisure Farms projects. After Leisure Farms 1, an agro-tourism and residential hobby farm project in Lemery, Batangas, comes Ponderosa Leisure Farms, fresh fragrant and in bloom, having just held its own groundbreaking. With these 2 Leisure Farms projects Landco harvests more than just a lifestyle.

Project 1: Farming as Leisure - Leisure Farms 1. The setting: Lemery, Batangas. In 116 hectares of rolling terrain and pure, virgin soil. On one side there's a view of Mt. Batulao. On another, the serene Balayan Bay. A landscape of green and an endless backdrop of blue sky. In the fresh, provincial air, something primitive, and wonderful. Who wouldn't want to embrace this beauty of life, and wonder why we can't live this beauty every day. With this longing in mind, Leisure Farms provides a setting for a new, nature-filled lifestyle for the "farm-loving city dweller." A place that interrupts one's daily urban cycles with refreshing cycles of the seasons. Planting, waiting, and harvesting. According to rain and sun, day and night, and the seasons of the land.

But wait, reality check. Farming is a lot of hard work of course. So here's where the leisure part comes in: Farm Management Services to enable Hassle Free Farming for hobby farm residents. There's the Village Store, Contract Growing Arrangements, Demo Farms, and Agricultural Training to meet all one's practical farming needs. From supplies like seeds, fertilizer, to technology, farming assistance, farm hands, and knowledge and expertise to develop your farming abilities.

And the resort part: To make sure the place is fun for the whole family, there's a Campsite, Bridle Path, Linear Lake, for outdoor adventure. A Town Center, Swimming Pool, Kids' Playground. Just 2 to 3 hours from Metro Manila, Leisure Farms should be a fresh, welcome addition to one's life cycles.

Project 2: A Garden in Bloom - Leisure Farms 2 is Ponderosa Leisure Farms. This one's a different-smelling story. Fields of flowers. Beauty, colors, scents in a series of flower farms and gardens. A world in bloom.

What can be more charming, beautiful, and refined than a sea of roses, labyrinths, trellised walkways, charming and simple benches and lampposts, haciendas. With flower and ornamental demo gardens, a commercial center, marketplace, and outdoor dining (al fresco) restaurant soon to rise, Ponderosa is envisioned to be a community in bloom, bringing garden lovers together where they can interact, tend their garden without worry or hassle, or just enjoy the beauty of flowers and the company of family and friends.

While Leisure Farms 1 features Filipino Neo-Vernacular Architecture, Ponderosa features a Mexican Spanish theme, creating a romantic and artsy setting to go with the abundance of roses. The Mexican country feel was the recommendation of Mrs. Maria Luisa Perez-Rubio, owner of Ponderosa Farms Inc and landowner of Ponderosa Leisure Farms.

As for quality of location, the place is just one hour away from Metro Manila, accessible two ways-through Sta. Rosa exit from South Superhighway or from Tagaytay. The place is on a peaceful, quiet area of rolling terrain, and within a convenient distance are hospitals, police centers, schools, churches, and other commercial areas, ensuring that everything home owners need is near. Besides, homeowners are expected to always stay longer than planned.

Landco Pacific Corp is a leading property developer of second home and residential resorts outside metro Manila such as Punta Fuego, Stonecrest and Canyon Woods. To learn more call Landco Pacific Corp at 807-8754 loc. 375. Visit their website www.landcopacific.com.

Product FILES

GE opens Cybermall Showroom

GE Appliances, through its official distributor CYA Industries, recently opened its new showroom located in the fresh Cybermall located in Eastwood City, Libis. The new showroom features the latest GE Appliances from the US such as stainless side-by-side refrigerators, dishwashers, free standing cookers and washing machines. In addition to the Cybermall showroom, GE also boasts of new showrooms that soft-launched late last year. GE expanded in the accessible, high profile areas of Glorietta 4 and MC Home Depot Fort Bonifacio. These are all in addition to its main showrooms in Shangri-La and Megamall. Call or visit the GE showrooms on the 4th level of Shangri-La Plaza (tel.631-8282), 5th level Bldg. B SM Megamall (tel.633-9953), Glorietta Mall, Glorietta 4 (tel.no.887-0075), Cybermall Eastwood City Libis ((tel.687-1566) or at the MC Home Depot Fort Bonifacio (tel.815-8875).

Jolly Spaghetti
Mas Meaty!

Meatier Jolly Spaghetti

JOLLIBEE has defined the Filipino spaghetti with Jolly Spaghetti that is sure to spell happiness with every pasta bite. It's perfect for any occasion. It has captured the palate of the Filipino, making it the measure of the Pinoy spaghetti taste as many Filipino households emulate its delicious flavor. Kids and adults alike crave for this great-tasting pasta with a uniquely Filipino flavor, especially now that it is made meatier. Enjoy it at the same affordable price of only P32. Go ahead and rediscover the Pinoy spaghetti with the Jolly Spaghetti.

BITS Clips

SMPO in Ayala concert

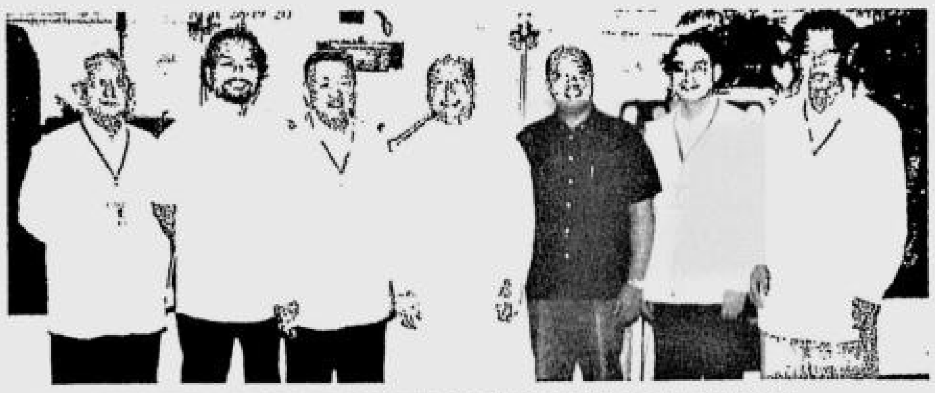
THE SAN Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra teams up with Cecile Licad, Eugene Castillo and Ryan Cayabyab for the 170th anniversary concert of Ayala Corporation to be held at 7:30 p.m. tonight at the fountain area of Tower One along Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas. The anniversary concert entitled "Hindi Kita Malimot: The Filipino as Romantic" will have Cayabyab in the finale conducting the SMPO in excerpts from "Great Filipino Love Songs," SMPO's new CD. The album will be released in major music stores to coincide with the performance and will also be available at the concert venue. "Hindi Kita Malimot" also celebrates the 42nd anniversary of the Ayala Foundation. Admission is free.

PWU HRM skills competition

THE PHILIPPINE Institute of Nutrition, Food Science and Technology in collaboration with the Association of Hotel and Restaurant Management Students of the Philippine Women's University will hold its skills competition with the theme "The Legacy of Excellence Lives On" on March 24 to 26 at the Bayanihan Paseo, Manila campus.

Credit, collection seminar

TOPICS include How to Secure Accounts and Guarantee Repayments; Preparation of Credit Instrument to Strengthen Credit Evidence; Detecting a Good from a Bad Credit Risk; Documentation and Registration of Mortgages for Lending Investors and Other Creditors; How to Collect a Bad Debt w/o Court Action etc. The seminar is on March 24, 1 to 5 p.m. at the Traders Hotel, Roxas Blvd, Pasay City. The seminar is sponsored by Porter and Miles Inc a premier training company on business, management, marketing, sales and HRD. Limited seats only, for reservation, call Mercy at 638-7719 to 20.



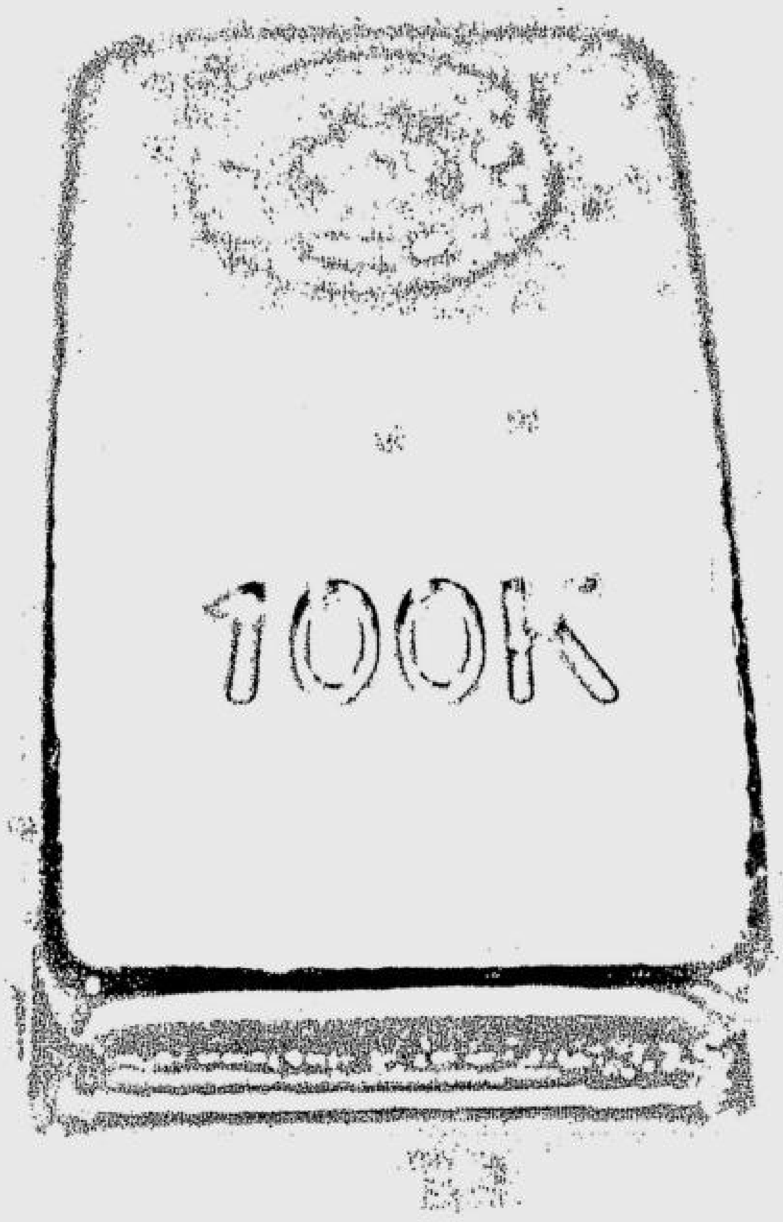
31ST ANNIVERSARY OF BUKLOD NG PAG-IBIG COMMUNITY

Bishop Honesto Ongtioco (center), first bishop of the Archdiocese of Cubao, celebrated the Holy Mass which capped the whole month of activities of the 31st Anniversary of Buklod ng Pag-ibig Community. With him in photo are (from left): Bro. Paquito Anonuevo, Fr. Eli Mata, SVD (concelebrant), Bro. Manny Recto, Fr. Domie Guzman, SSP, Bro. Andy Sebastian and Bro. Cesar Dignos.

RCML, GSE VISIT THE INQUIRER

The Rotary Club of Makati-Legazpi was one of the host clubs of District 3830 Group Study Exchange (GSE) Program with District 2510 of Hokkaido, Japan. In photo is one of the GSE members, Shinji Sakuma (center), who visited the offices of the Philippine Daily Inquirer recently together with the president of Rotary Club Makati Legazpi, Imelda Dizon and Jean Hipol of RCML secretariat. Standing (from left) are the executives of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, namely: Donald Lim, Celine Madamba and Kenny Nuyda.

Passion



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SR A/T	891,000	100,000	68,410	47,119	37,437	26,839	21,899	18,780	
GSX A/T	842,000	100,000	63,978	44,066	35,014	25,102	20,481	17,564	
GLX A/T	802,000	100,000	60,360	41,574	33,036	23,684	19,324	16,570	
GL GAS	693,000	100,000	50,501	34,784	27,645	19,819	16,171	13,864	
DLX GAS (15.20%dp)	658,000	100,000	47,335	32,603	25,914	18,578	15,159	12,995	
DLX GAS (50%dp)	658,000	329,000	27,417	18,278	14,561	10,430	8,503	7,230	
RAV4 4x2 (10.02%dp)	998,000	100,000	78,088	53,785	42,729	30,633	24,994	21,298	
RAV4 4x2 (50%dp)	998,000	499,000	41,955	28,884	22,952	16,440	13,403	11,405	10,697

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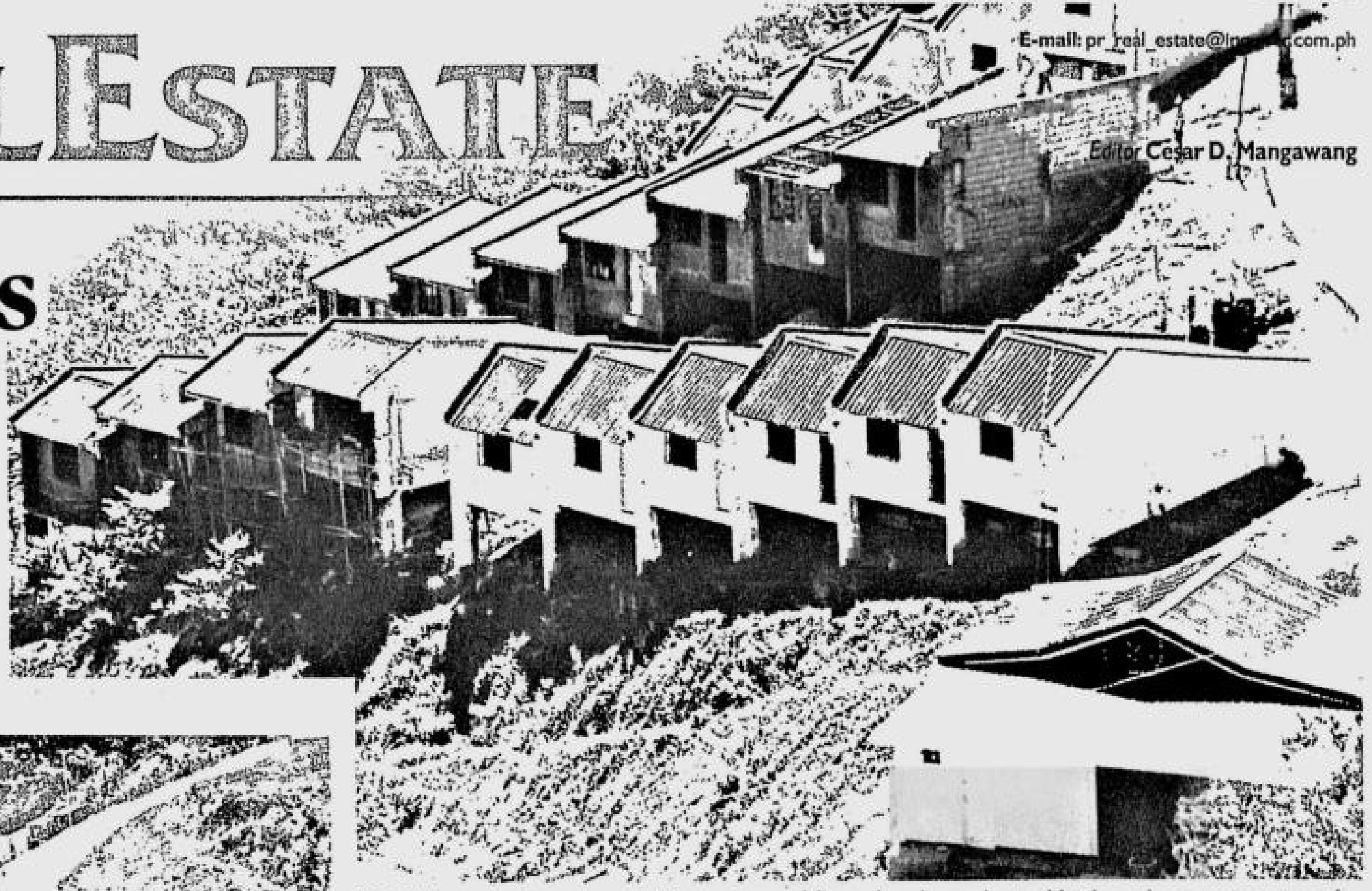
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang



WORK, however, has resumed at the controversial mass housing project, said to be on loose, watery ground.

DENR probes controversial Buhai mass housing project

By Jerry Esplanada

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources is looking into reports that the controversial Buhai mass housing project in the Bulacan hinterlands is "sitting on loose, watery ground" and "could be a potential Cherry Hills."

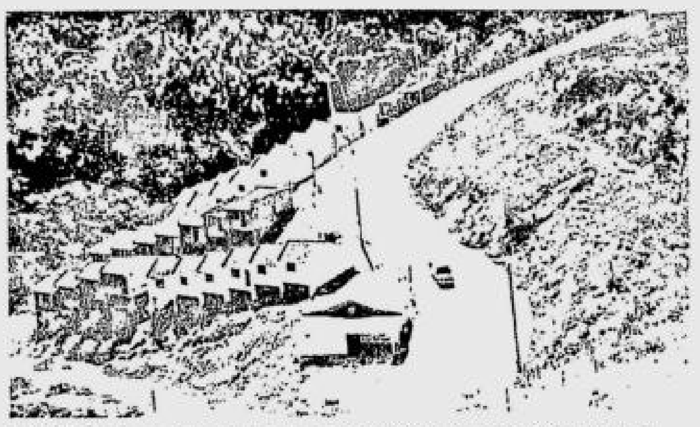
At this writing, a team from the DENR's Bureau of Soils was "gathering soil and rock samples" and "conducting necessary tests" at the project site, perched on the slopes of a hill chain in Norzagaray and Doña Remedios Trinidad towns.

'Accident waiting to happen'

Bulacan local officials have called the pet project of Gov. Josefina dela Cruz "an accident waiting to happen" as they also warned of a repeat of the Cherry Hills housing estate disaster.

The Aug. 3, 1999 disaster at Cherry Hills subdivision in Antipolo City killed at least 59 people and destroyed 379 houses.

Buhai, also known as Buhai Garden Homes, is the acronym for Bulacan Housing and Agro-Industrial Inc.



RELOCATION of the first batch of squatters to Buhai did not push through last month as announced by Bulacan Gov. Josefina dela Cruz.

Relocation reset

In a related development, the relocation of the first batch of squatters to Buhai did not push through last month as announced earlier by Dela Cruz.

Employees of Ko-op Mart at the provincial capitol grounds in Malolos City, supposedly among the first batch of Buhai housing beneficiaries, said they had no idea when they would move to their new community.

The mini supermarket, closed for over a month now, is "undergoing renovation," said its manager.

Businessman Dominador Tupaz Jr., president of the Pasig City-based real estate firm Alto Projekt Asia, the Bulacan provincial government's private sector partner, said in a phone interview the relocation of squatters would definitely push through some time in April.

Tupaz put the blame on the "much-delayed installation of electrical supply at the project site," where less than 100 housing units have been put up so far.

Aside from the Ko-op staff, also "ready to transfer" to Buhai were construction workers, corn planters and laborers at Tupaz's corn sillage plant in Angat town and security guards in both the corn milling facility and Buhai, said a report on Buhai, called Operation "Maayos na Paglipat."

The same report also made the following claims:

- "The first 300 beneficiaries who have complied with housing documentary requirements have been awarded their lots.
- "The factory for home-made and packaged products is now being finalized.
- "Provisions for structure of (squatters') livelihood projects, such as the beverages factory, packaging centers, piggery and aquaculture, are now on stream."

Capitol insiders, however, denied the claims.

Only two guards are currently employed at the project site. Incidentally, one of them is a brother of former Bangkal barangay captain Narciso Ramos, one of two local officials who allegedly brokered the sale of the land used for the project, the other being a Bulacan board member.

Buhai housing beneficiaries are supposedly Bulacan squatters who will be displaced by the $400-million plus Northrail project.

The North Luzon Railways Development Corp., which is under the supervision of the Bases Conversion Development Authority, had earlier donated the project site.

Last month, the Export-Import Bank of China approved the government's request for a $400-million loan for the Northrail project, which will use the long-abandoned line of the Philippine National Railways that is parallel to the North Luzon Toll Road.

First phase

The first phase of the project, which involves the construction of a 32.2-km rail track that will run from Caloocan City to Malolos City, is expected to be completed in two to three years.

Meanwhile, work at a 160-hectare portion of the 300-ha. Buhai has resumed, albeit still at a snail's pace.

The Bulacan provincial government and Alto Projekt Asia plan to put up 10,000 housing units at Buhai.

Sources at the Bulacan capitol had earlier confirmed Norzagaray town and barangay executives' charges that the Buhai site was not only landslide-prone but also geologically hazardous.

"It's a good thing (DENR soil experts) have stepped into the picture," said a soon-to-retire provincial employee.

Buhai has been touted by Dela Cruz as "another Tagaytay Highlands" and a perfect example of what she considers a "total township development program."

Warnings

Norzagaray Mayor Feliciano Legaspi, however, warned "putting up a housing estate on those slopes was wrong. That's one of the reasons we didn't give them a permit."

"Even portions of the (8.67-km) access road to the project site have either cracked or caved in," according to Legaspi. (Buhai is not accessible from Poblacion, DRT.)

Similar warnings were issued by Legaspi in late 2002, following the collapse of a portion of the housing project after a heavy downpour.

Like the mayor, Bangkal barangay chair Marcelino Punzal scoffed at the capitol's bold plan.

"That place, which sits on de-

DENR/C3

YOUTHBUILD 2004 LAUNCH Despite the heat, Habitat for Humanity Philippines volunteers show up during the YouthBuild 2004 launch in San Pedro, Laguna, to build houses for 400 families living at railroad tracks. Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller, his wife Linda and friend Judy O'Bannon (former first lady of Indianapolis) are here in the country to visit Habitat build sites in Laguna, Mindanao and the NCR. Habitat for Humanity Philippines is being supported by the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

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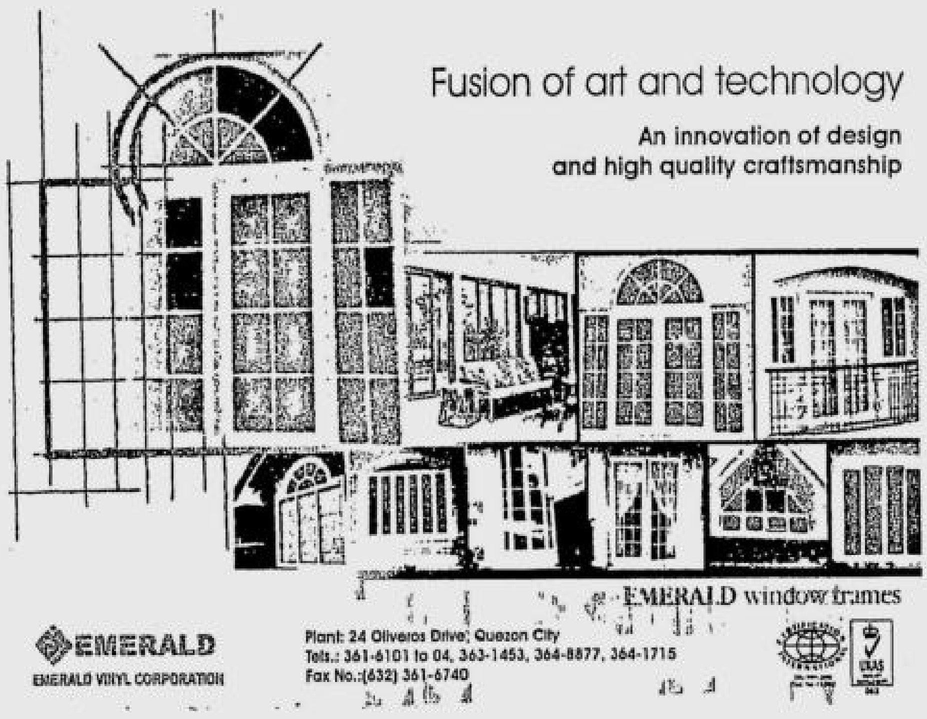

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Need for hygienic materials sparks new trend in construction industry

THE GROWING consciousness worldwide has spawned a new trend toward the use of hygienic and bacteria-free construction materials.

This development has become even more pronounced with the global rise of epidemics caused by viruses and bacteria that find refuge in porous solid surface materials that absorb water.

Such porous materials include marbles, granites and other natural stones or ignitious rocks most frequently used as reception counters, wash basins, kitchen and food countertops in expensive homes, offices, hotels and food chains.

However, the porous surfaces of these materials become breeding ground for bacteria and other harmful microscopic organisms, especially when exposed to food, moisture, or a damp environment.

Japanese technology

Nonetheless, this health hazard has been eliminated through a Japanese technology that creates a nonporous but very elegant solid surface material, which resembles marbles or granites.

Yet, this product, called Abient, is even glossier and more stylish than real marbles or granites that need constant polishing to keep their shine. This is because Abient is made of Japan aluminum hydroxide and acrylic and polyester resin formed through a very intricate process to give it the natural marble or granite look. Abient also boasts of more than 300 colors and stone-like patterns and patented designs to choose from.

"Very neat and totally impenetrable to the tiniest microorganism, Abient has excellently passed the Japanese Food Hygiene Law for food zone area," said Elmer Caparros, president of Filipino firm Polytex Marketing Corp., the product's distributor in the Philippines.

Exported to Europe

"And because of its safety and hygienic properties, Abient is being exported to Europe and now widely used in Japan as food, bar and kitchen countertops, wash basins, reception counters, integrated lavatory, wall paneling, and slabs, among many others," Caparros added.

Being fire- and heat-resistant and virtually incombustible, Abient has also passed the Japanese Standard Test Method for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials.

The product is being manufactured by the Japan-based Onda Group in its factory at the People's Technology Complex in Carmona, Cavite.

Modular cabinets

A sister company of Polytex, the Onda Group also has another pioneering health-oriented construction material for modular kitchen systems to complement its Abient countertops.

These so-called Onda modular cabinets are made of high-density wood fibers that are so compressed and completely clad in elegant piano finish that these are not only bacteria-free but also termite-proof and does not warp or bloat whether in temperate or in tropical countries.

Most importantly, though, the material is free of formalin, a wood preservative that is reportedly a cancer agent.

The product and its technology were developed by Onda as a result of Japan's banning of formalin in wood treatment.

Around 95 percent of Onda's products manufactured in the Philippines are for export, and only 5 percent are earmarked for local distribution.

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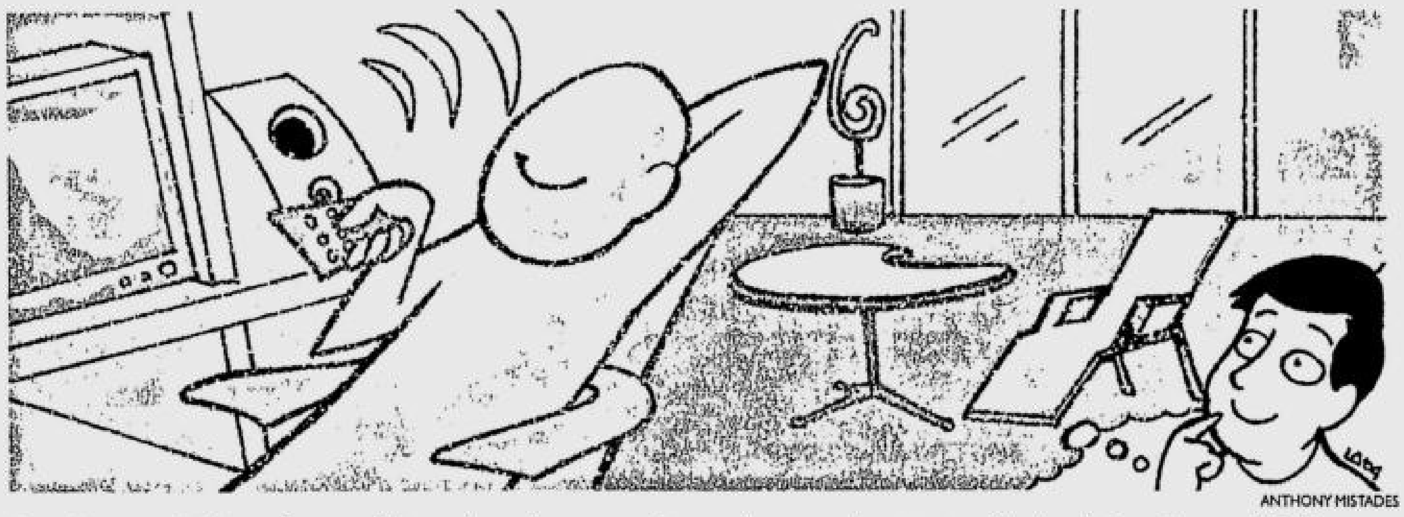
The investment value of a new home


ANTHONY MISTADES

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

BUILDING DREAMS

THE MOST important marketing word is "free." Many manufacturers of consumable items give away free samples easily. Second to the word "free" is the word "new." Since a house cannot be given away free in order for a user to try it, a "new" home can have a very strong appeal to the homebuyer. Similar to buying a car, there are two routes toward owning a home—either you buy a new one or a used one.

Buying a new home can offer many advantages:

• **Maintaining a New Home Is Cheaper**—Again, similar to a new car, a new home is cheaper to maintain because we expect to fully utilize the useful value of its components. This means that there are less repairs needed.

• **A New Home Fits Your Current Lifestyle**—Since it is a new one, you will have an influence into its final design. You can choose practically any layout or color that you would wish. All you have to do is tell your designer and builder the features that you would want to be incorporated into your home. The home can be custom made to your liking.

• **A New Home Has Features that Fit the Times**—With the surge of high-tech gadgets, piped in music, internet, computer in every room, security systems, etc., new homes may come in with all of these features. All of the wirings are built-in and you may not see any exposed wires or extension cords around. If you buy a used home, it may cost you a lot of money to install all of these gadgets for you would have to fit in a new wiring system to accommodate your current technological needs.

Also, due to the changing family environment like double-income households, new homes are easier to clean due to the nature of the materials being used.

• **New Homes Are Made of New Materials**—With the advancement of material science, most new homes use environment-friendly materials. Asbestos roofing that was used in the '60s is no longer used today due to its effect on the environment and to the health of people. The steel drainage lines that were used in homes built 40 years ago are now replaced with the lighter and more practical PVC lines. Even cold water lines are now made of PVC these days.

If new homes have a certain magic into them, they also have a few disadvantages which make used homes attractive.

• **New Homes Are More Expensive**—The cost of building a home now is more than it was to build 30 years ago even if the cost comparison is adjusted for inflation. Just like a new car, you have to buy it at full price. A used home depreciates due to wear and tear and can be more affordable.

• **New Homes Are Built In New Communities**—Since developers need vast tracts of land to develop multiple housing units, new homes are usually located in areas that are a little far from the center of town. These can be far from the basic infrastructures like schools, hospitals and shopping malls. A few years from now, these "far" sites will become the prime locations.

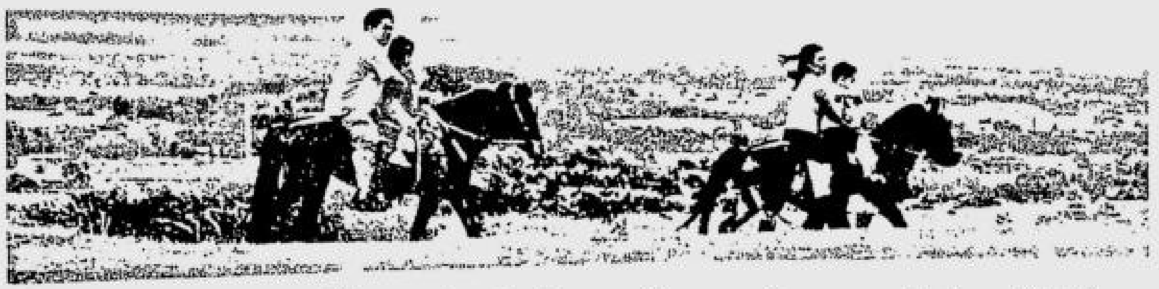
There are, however, small developers that build homes in existing communities that are near established schools and infrastructure. You may want to look at these pieces of property.

• **New Homes May Have High Association Dues**—Some new communities, in order to maintain the security and exclusivity of the area, charge higher association dues for the upkeep of its community. Neighborhood associations of new subdivisions usually charge higher association dues than older subdivisions since there are fewer residents in the area.

Final Note. A new home offers many advantages but also has some disadvantages. If you have the financial muscle for a new one, then go for it. If not, then you may want to do it in increments—buy a vacant lot and build later. Whether it's new, used or abused, there is value into the property that only the future occupant can tell. Always remember that in buying a home, make sure that you know what you want, what you need and what you can afford.

* * *

E-mail the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.


GUESTS and residents recently enjoyed exploring Ayala Greenfield Estates via horseback riding during its "The Great Family Picnic" event. The occasion highlighted the subdivision's emphasis on leisure and relaxation with various activities for all ages.

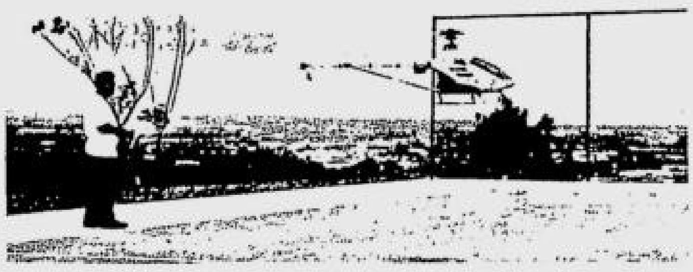
Summer festivities begin with 'The Great Family Picnic' at Ayala Greenfield Estates

SUMMER officially began at the Ayala Greenfield Estates on March 7 as "The Great Family Picnic" event kicked off a season of exceptional fun. Ayala Land's high-end subdivision played host to a series of leisurely activities for the whole family. It was a one-of-a-kind celebration that gave visitors memorable experiences of Ayala Greenfield Estates' distinguished amenities and splendid attention to recreation.

Excited guests sampled the site's play-conducive features, which gave them a glimpse of how homeowners relax in the premier residential project. The Nature Park, for instance, showed its capacity for maximum unwinding through kite-flying and family barbecues and picnics. The lagoon became a miniaturized lake where several guests were allowed to fish or play remote-controlled toy boats.

GUESTS and residents alike try to snag big ones at the Fishing Lagoon. The occasion highlighted the subdivision's emphasis on leisure and relaxation with various activities for all ages.

Some guests preferred playing at the putting green, while others explored Ayala Greenfield Estates through the mountain bikes provided by the Village Clubhouse. What seemed to be the highlight of the day, however, is the scene-stealing horseback riding activity. Young and old alike were enticed to ride the majestic creatures along predetermined nature trails. It capped off a relaxing day filled with fun, food and fond memories.


GUESTS and residents were encouraged to play with radio-controlled cars, boats and choppers. Other activities like horseback riding, mountain biking and kite flying enticed visitors to explore the subdivision's most relaxing, play-conducive and picturesque spots.

Visitors were captivated by scenic views of Mt. Makiling and the all-weather championship golf course via the vantage points afforded by the Village Clubhouse and the Nature Park. The typically cool environment made these activities extremely comfortable for the visitors.

The fine combination of clean, fresh air with the rich greenery of Ayala Greenfield Estates exemplifies the subdivision's emphasis on a healthy alternative to the oft-distressing conditions in the urban setting. This was made clearer for the guests as they saw many wondrous dimensions to the site during the event.

While everyone waits for the grand opening of the country's truest championship golf course, the entire family can soar through the sky in Ayala Greenfield Estates' kite adventures, hitch a ride on the horses, snag a big one in the fishing lagoon, or race the wind with remote-controlled sailboats and cars in the next few weeks.

Sundays this summer will be grander, as the following activities will be highlighted in special daylong events: mountain biking (March 14), fishing at the lagoon (March 21), kite flying (March 28), badminton (April 4), tennis (April 11), basketball (April 18), and RC car and boat exhibition (April 25).

Further information on Ayala Greenfield Estates is available at www.ayalaland.com.ph. You can also email ayala-sales@ayalaland.com.ph, or call 848-5000.

Fire safety at the Tower

FIRE safety is one of the primary features that people consider when buying a condominium unit. A building may have a spectacular architectural design, may be a major engineering feat, may come with the best in features and facilities. But if it does not look like it will be safe to live in, a prospective buyer might just move on to another property.

The engineers behind The Shang Grand Tower, the Kuok Group's latest property development project in the Philippines, have provided some of the best fire protection installations to ensure fire safety in Makati's latest luxury address.

J.P. Rapi (Phil.) was established in 1995 to provide consultancy services for the Kuok pieces of property in the country. Director in charge of The Shang Grand Tower, engineer Isagani M. Martinez, lists the fire safety systems they are currently installing along with the building's construction.

Fire safety systems

Fire stopping and fire retardant walls prevent the spread of smoke and fire from one floor to the other. Likewise, the entire building is provided with an automatic sprinkler system plus smoke detectors in all bedrooms. The "quick response type" automatic sprinklers are also present in the carpark areas as well as the amenities floor.

Two sets of fire pumps will be utilized to supply water in case of fire for the low pressure zone and high pressure zone. Both sets are provided with a standby unit in case one fails or is out of service for maintenance. These fire pumps and jockey pumps are motor driven. But in case of power failure, the emergency generators can supply power.

In the event of fire evacuation, the fire escape scissor stairs are provided with stairwell pressurization fans with pressure relief dampers, differential static pressure sensors and controllers. The purpose of these is to prevent overpressurization of the stairwell to a certain limit of 0.20 in. (50 Pa). W.G. and prevent smoke from entering the stairwell during fire. These are mandatory requirements for any high-rise building.

The service elevator was designated as a fireman's lift. In case of fire, the building fire brigade or city fire department can use this to access each floor in the building.

In case of buildup of smoke in the early stages of fire, the exhaust fans for the corridors and hallways of the residential floors will be utilized to extract smoke. The fans are powered by both normal electric power and emergency generators in case of a power failure.

Fire prevention guidelines

This being Fire Safety month, Martinez also shared some fire prevention guidelines helpful to condo residents:

- Do not smoke in the bedrooms or living rooms.
- Do not store flammable liquids such as paint thinner, solvents or fuel alcohol in the residential units.
- Avoid overloading the electrical outlets, i.e. "octopus connections."
- Ensure that matches and cigarette lighters are properly stored and beyond the reach of the children.

The Shang Grand Tower is located at the corner of Dela Rosa, Perea and Nieva Streets in Legaspi Village. Construction is currently at the 9th level, with work finishing one floor per week. The building is expected for completion in December 2005. For inquiries, reservations and a tour of model units, visit their sales office at Fort Bonifacio Global City, or call 811-1819, 811-0556, or 811-0557.

Boracay's biggest convention center soon to rise

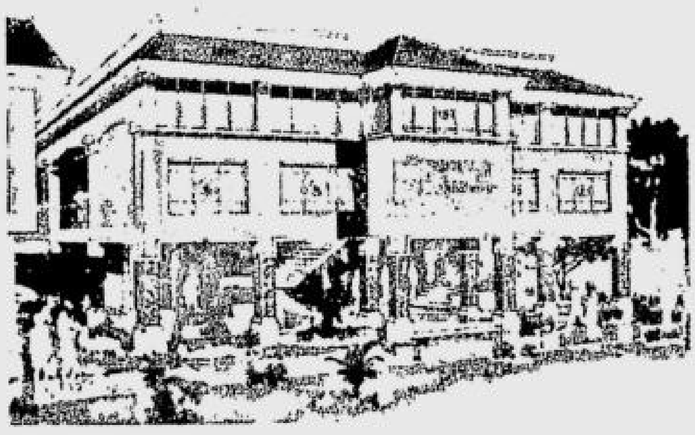
THE FIRST triple-A resort located along the magnificent stretch of the country's most celebrated white sand beach, Boracay Regency Beach Resort, starts construction of the largest convention center to rise on the island paradise.

Pioneering entrepreneur, chair and president of Boracay Regency Henry Chusuey recognized the need for a state-of-the-art convention center as it welcomes more and more corporate clients each year.

"We would like to continue being Boracay's preferred hotel when it comes to corporate gatherings by building this high-tech facility. Boracay Regency has always been known for its firsts, and this structure will undoubtedly be one of those firsts," Chusuey said.

The modern convention center will have the same warmth as the tastefully designed rooms and dining facilities of the Boracay Regency. Boasting of a 600-person capacity, the center will also have five function rooms for smaller groups. The latest audio-visual facilities and cutting-edge presentation tools will facilitate efficient discussions and team-building seminars of growing and established companies. The remarkable project will be completed by October of this year.

Aside from these advancements, managers, executives and employees have the pleasure of rewarding their accomplishments in a setting that invigorates and inspires. Boracay Regency's 85 well-appointed air-conditioned and native-inspired rooms with lanais, fabulous dining and entertainment establishments, swimming pool, gym, salon and spa are great complements to the merry Boracay lifestyle. For inquiries, call 02-5238707 to 08.

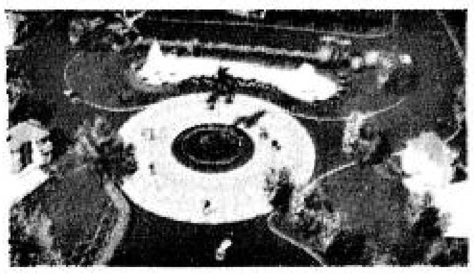

THE BORACAY Regency beach resort's convention center will feature state-of-the-art convention facilities and a 600-person capacity.

Arbitrators elect officers, directors

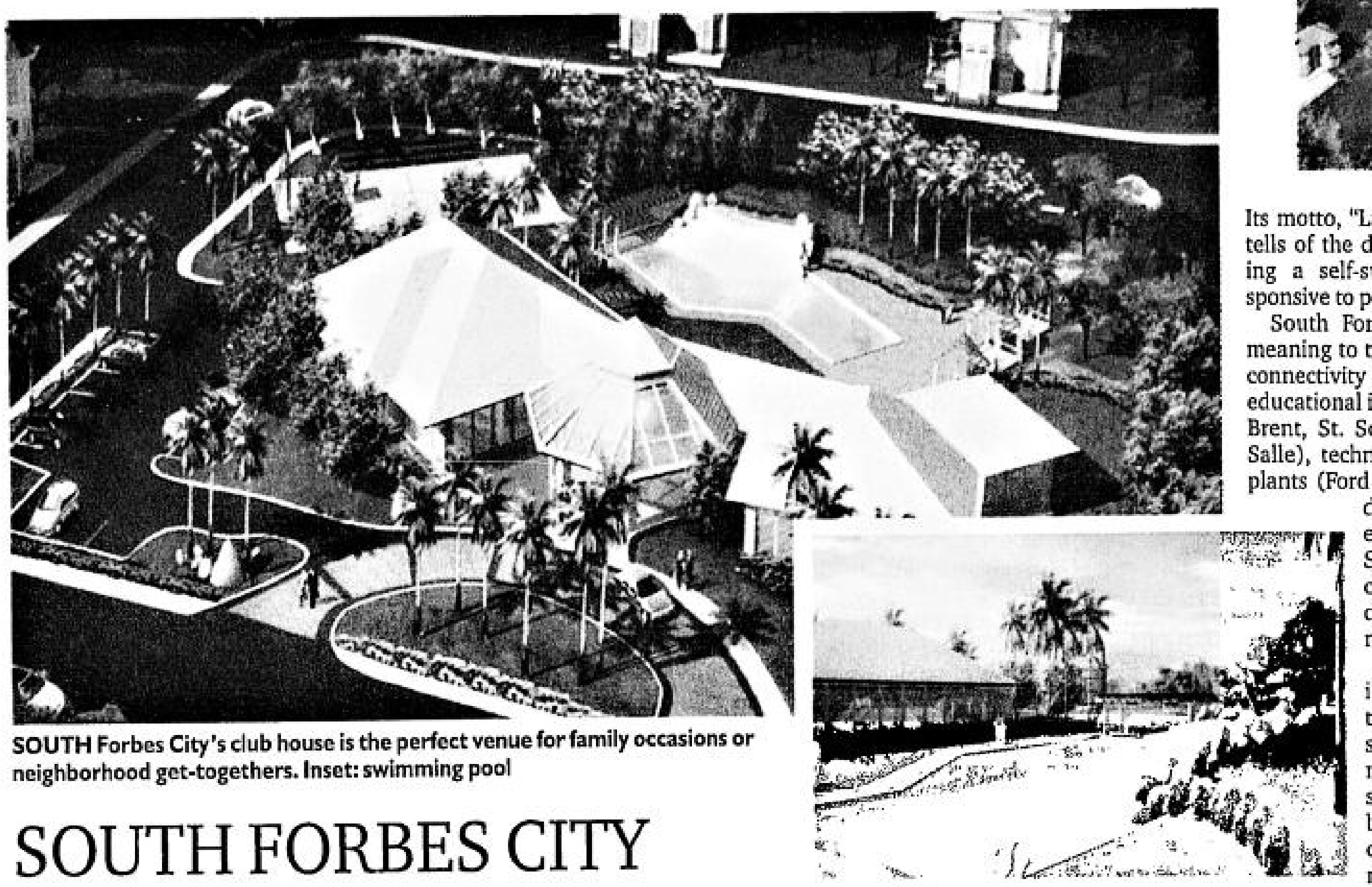
MEMBERS of the Philippine Institute of Construction Arbitrators (Pica) recently elected engineer Eliseo I. Evangelista, president; engineer Salvador P. Castro Jr., vice president; engineer Vicente B. Lopez, secretary; Joven B. Joaquin, treasurer; engineer Lauro M. Cruz, auditor; Judge Federico Y. Alikpala Jr., PRO; engineer Ernesto J. Battad, business manager; and lawyer Alfredo Tadiar, legal counsel.

Other members of the board of directors are lawyers Ma. Clara Tankeh-Asuncion, Regulus E. Cabote and Beda G. Fajardo; architects Felicitas Plo Roda and Rosauro Paderon; engineer Felisberto G. L. Reyes and Dr. Ernesto S. de Castro.

Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Cancio B. Garcia sworn in the officers and directors during induction ceremonies.



RESIDENTS will love taking leisurely strolls through South Forbes City's pocket parks—a lovely expanse of tall trees and fresh air.



SOUTH Forbes City's club house is the perfect venue for family occasions or neighborhood get-togethers. Inset: swimming pool

SOUTH FORBES CITY

A vision of the future

A REFRESHING, invigorating environment is being born at the core of Manila's technological institutions.

Picture a wide expanse of lush greenery, dotted with beautifully designed homes and abundant with cool breezes, warm sunshine and the laughter of playing children. These promising developments are taking place in an exciting new project called South Forbes City.

The new Forbes

When people hear the word "Forbes," they immediately associate it with the moneyed elite living in the ritzy village bearing the same name. But for the developers of this new residential project accessible through the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) via the Sta. Rosa-Tagaytay Road, the word means more than just a vast space filled with impressive structures.

The 250-hectare South Forbes City is being envisioned by developer Cathay Land Inc. to be the landmark residential project that meets above-average standards.

A seemingly peaceful and picturesque village, the city will have all the trimmings of a modern metropolis invisibly tucked under the cover of charming tree-lined walkways, a breezy mini-park, spacious clubhouse and multipurpose halls, refreshing swimming pools and convenient commercial areas.

Where the future is

Many are unaware that this city is being quietly built within the still and undisturbed corners where prestigious Ayala's Westgrove Heights stands. The immense tract of land is strategically located near Laguna's industrial hub. Real estate executives are speaking in hushed tones about Cathay Land's most innovative residential project to date.

Its motto, "Live Where The Future Is," tells of the developer's vision of creating a self-sustaining community responsive to present and future needs.

South Forbes City also gives new meaning to the words accessibility and connectivity because of its proximity to educational institutions (Xavier School, Brent, St. Scholastica, Don Bosco, La Salle), technology and manufacturing plants (Ford, Coca Cola, Toyota, Honda, Panasonic), commercial establishments (Paseo de Sta. Rosa) and recreational centers (Enchanted Kingdom and surrounding malls).

Targeted at starting families, young executives, retirees and OFWs tired of the stressful urban environment, the city brings outstanding value for money by providing the most gracious way of living with the most budget-friendly terms. The growing confidence in the potential of the Calabarzon (Calamba, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) area is complemented with South Forbes' meticulous and responsible planning.

City of contrasts

"Home",is first and foremost the best description of this growing community. Here, getting in touch with nature comes easy and children can learn the true meaning of neighborly love.

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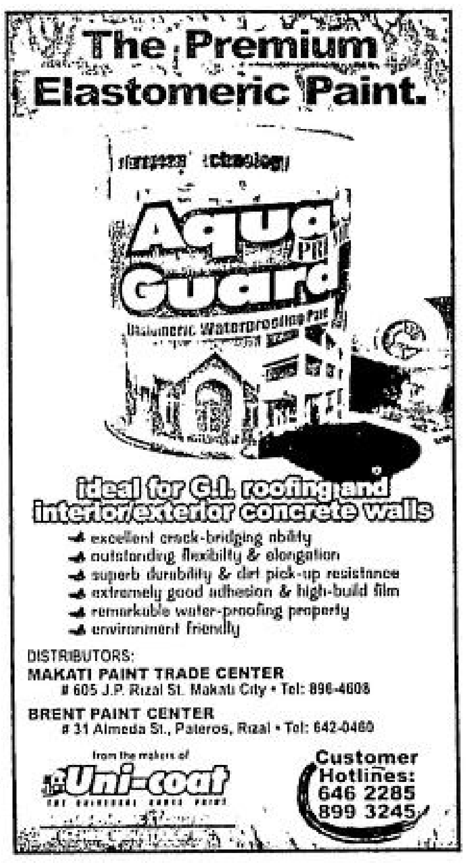

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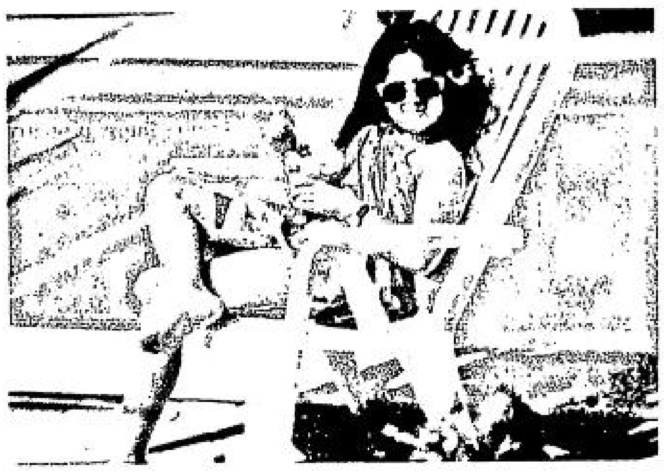
Stylish living within your reach at Fifth Avenue Place

THE IDEA of a truly world-class residential lifestyle has long been associated with the prestigious name of Fifth Avenue in New York. Combining modern conveniences and unique lifestyles has began a trend in Manhattan that has resulted in the construction of lavish residences stretching as far as Central Park. Fifth Avenue has been the home of such prominent families such as the Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Belmonts and the Goulds.

The city remains headquarters to much of finance, advertising, media, fashion, publishing and corporate law offices such as the Empire State Building, the New York Public Library, Rockefeller Center, Broadway theaters, Macy's, Cartier and the finest dining, nightlife and entertainment in the world. Fifth Avenue is a premium address that offers privileged lifestyle not readily available elsewhere. Now you can... if you're living in Fifth Avenue Place in Fort Bonifacio Global City!

Affordable lifestyle

Named after the famous boulevard in upscale Manhattan, the Fifth Avenue Place similarly offers the best of modern urban conveniences. Rising at the corner of 5th Avenue and 21st Drive, its 38-story tower offers affordable lifestyle along millionaires row. Fifth Avenue Place is just right beside the renowned addresses of Essensa and Regent Parkway. Yes, yuppies and middle income families can now live in style within their means and without even moving to Manhattan.



FIFTH Avenue Place's swimming pool complex and beautiful landscaped gardens are refreshing treats to cool down on a clear and summer day.

The Fifth Avenue Place is located right within the vicinity of other prestigious addresses like the Manila Golf Club, the Manila Polo Club and Forbes Park. Living at Fifth Avenue Place gives you the chance to simply bask in the relaxing atmosphere of its spacious and charming gardens, which is reminiscent of the impressive gardens found in world's best mansions like that of business magnate Andrew Carnegie at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue, New York. Its refreshing ambiance is also perfect for that early morning jog or a power workout at the gym before rushing to work. A friendly match with your next-door buddies at one of the badminton courts or a romantic chat amid the moon and the clear night skies would be a great way to end the day. Weekends and late afternoons become perfect treats for the kids on the pool, at the children's playground and at the game room.

Singles and young couples will find the executive studio units at the Fifth Avenue Place more cozy and spacious than the average studio. Families can choose from one to three bedroom suites depending on their needs. Units have been designed along contemporary lines, giving you a vantage point to your preferred orientation. For bigger families who need more space, the layout is flexible and allows combination of units that fits your lifestyle.

Direct access

As a resident of Fifth Avenue Place, you have direct access to limitless activities in the vibrant complex of the Global City. Service and retail shops such as S&R Price Smart and MC Home Depot make daily essentials come in handy. The British School Manila, the Manila Japanese School and International School Manila offer the youth a privileged education at par with global standards. Sports aficionados and those in pursuit of an active nightlife will definitely enjoy their proximity to the Sports Camp and The Fort, which are literally just a few steps away. Hip, cozy and fine-dining restaurants spill over the rows of the commercial center. The soon to rise St. Luke's Medical Center brings expert health care closer to home.

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CPAC Monier Philippines posts 70% sales increase in 2003

CPAC Monier Philippines Inc. (CMPI), a joint company between Lafarge of France and the Siam Cement Group of Thailand, said it posted a hefty 70 percent increase in volume sales in 2003 compared with the previous year because of the surging demand for its concrete roof tile products.

CMPI general manager Rodolfo Bueno said the increase in sales of CPAC Monier roofing systems is mainly due to their successful campaign among housing developers to convert from using metal roofing toward concrete roofing products.

Dramatic shift

"There was a dramatic shift from metal roofs to CPAC Monier concrete roof tiles last year, and we expect more developers to follow suit," Bueno said.

Architect Arnel Nacor, CMPI sales and marketing manager, said they now have over 50 percent market share in the concrete roofing industry where there are only four major players, making them the undisputed market leader.

Nacor said they are targeting to further increase their sales volume by at least 40 percent in the current year through strategic actions and new initiatives aimed at generating value for their customers, more than their competitors can.

Fully aware

Among the major developers that have shifted to CPAC Monier roofing system are Crown Asia and Camella Homes. Both recently signed an agreement with CMPI for the supply and installation of CPAC Monier roof tiles and accessories for their housing projects nationwide.

CMPI officials said developers are now fully aware of the advantages of using concrete roof tiles. Aside from being cost-effective and more durable, CPAC Monier concrete roof tiles are also good insulators especially against noise from heavy rains.

Backed by world-class technology provided by Lafarge, CMPI is able to produce in its Sto. Tomas, Batangas plant up to two million tiles monthly. The quality of CPAC Monier roof tiles produced in the Philippines is the same as those available in more than 40 countries worldwide where the CPAC Monier brand also leads.

DENR probes Buhai . . .

From page C1

posits of silica and diorite, is prone to landslides, especially during the rainy season," Punzal said.

Punzal's aide quoted one of the Buhai engineers as saying the place was "not ideal for building concrete homes because the soil there is loose."

In native Bulacan-speak, Bangkal folk described the site's soil condition as *buhaghag* and *kalang-kalang*, both meaning loose.

When interviewed, Dela Cruz said she would not allow herself to be attached to a project that is not safe, noting "I don't need that kind of burden to my conscience."

To back up her claim, Dela Cruz furnished the INQUIRER a copy of Buhai's "geotechnical investigation report" on the soil strength parameters of the underlying soil and slope stability of the "unrestrained slopes" at the project site.

The four-page report, prepared by a Buhai consultant firm called BIPGMTE, neither said the Buhai site was safe nor unsafe for the construction of a mass housing estate.

Not the perfect choice

But it indicated the hill chain was not the perfect choice for a project of such magnitude with the following recommendations:

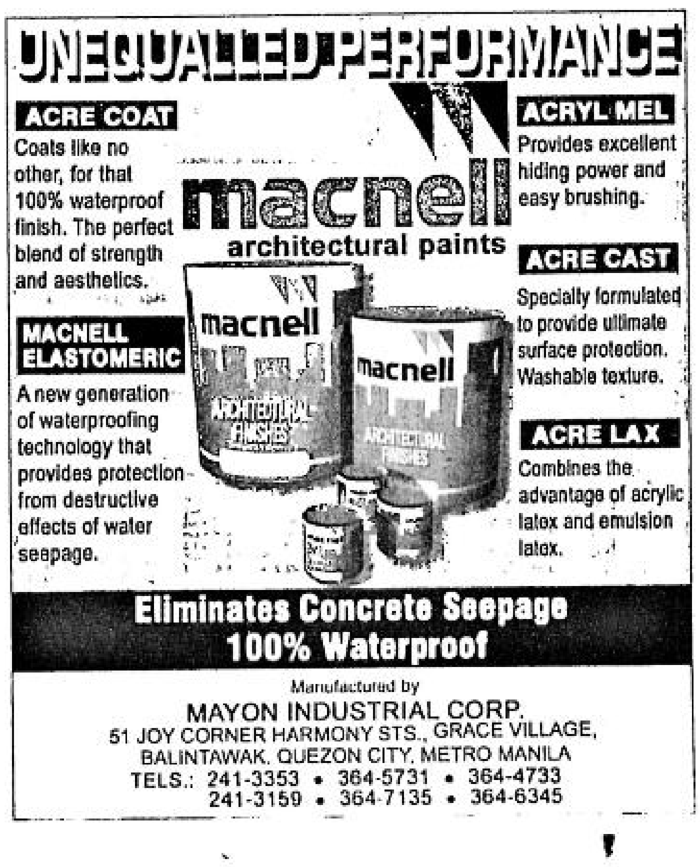
- On the soil's bearing capacity, "the top soil that was not used as basis for the interpretation of soil-bearing pressures should not be used as foundation material."
- On the critical unrestrained slopes, "the slip circle with the minimum factor of safety should be intercepted by a cantilever retaining structure."
- On foundation support, it "highly recommended that foundations for the structures should not be less than the minimum width used in the interpretation of soil-bearing pressures."

Need for hygienic materials sparks new trend . . .

From page C1

These products were showcased in the recently concluded Worldbex exhibit at the World Trade Center Metro Manila. They are also on display at the Polytex showroom at the MC Home Builders Depot on Edsa corner Pasong Tamo Ext. in Makati City (Tel. 817-7697), Century Plaza Complex at J. Osmeña St. in Cebu City (Tel. 032-2555885/6), and PMC Uniwide Coastal Mall on Roxas Boulevard in Parañaque City, Metro Manila (Tel. 852-9928).

The outlet at the Uniwide Coastal Mall also serves as a stockroom for Onda's export overruns, high-end and made-to-order items at more affordable prices.



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Contractors to pulse laborers' choice of President

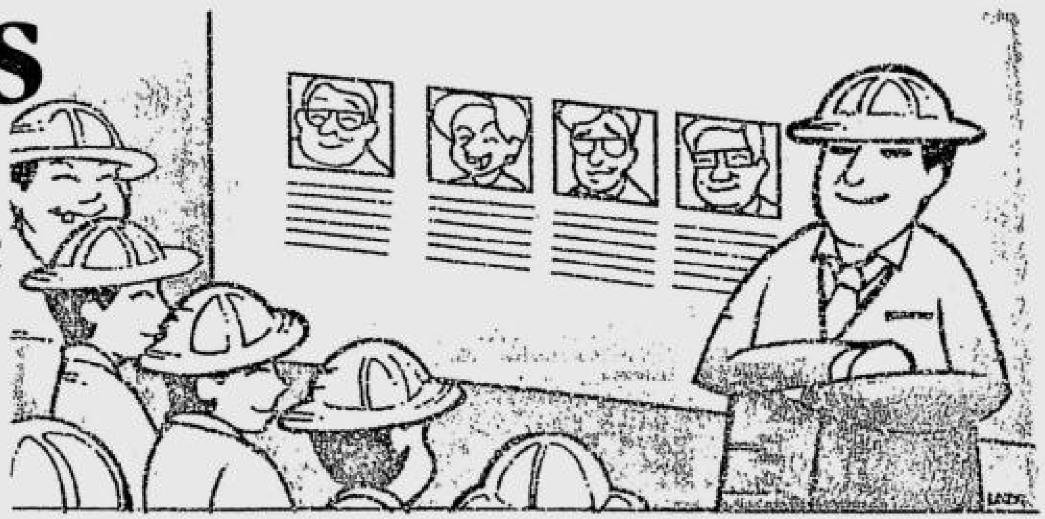


ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY MISTADES

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE BIG bosses at the Philippine Constructors Association Inc. will do their own survey on their own construction workers.

Probably not seeing a true reflection of their people's electoral will in the numerous surveys popping out left and right, the PCA survey will determine how well their workers know their candidates in the coming national elections. The survey will help the PCA address the real issue for the planned voters' information primer.

Short primer

A short primer for construction workers is now being prepared in time for the 2004 national elections. The platforms and profiles of all candidates are being prepared to be included in the primer, and PCA officers have started interviewing candidates for national positions. The organization told the INQUIRER it is not endorsing any candidate.

The construction industry accounts for a sizable number of votes. There are about 1.741 million workers nationwide, and another 500,000 are workers overseas.

The PCA is also said to be a good representation of the grassroots' pulse. The workforce comes from the populous C to E classes and belongs to all religious denominations and political ideologies.

The PCA officers stress the importance of the voters' information project during the signing of the memorandum of agreement between the PCA and tradeshow organizer Global Link Business Communications for the PhilConstruct 2004 in November attended by top contractors in the country.

The PCA says the group wanted workers to go out and vote, and be able to understand that whatever they write on the ballot forms is the future of their children.

Says PCA executive director Manolito Madrasto: "First, we would like to make sure that the name the laborers place in their ballots is the position the corresponding candidate is running for, so the vote won't be wasted. Though that is the job of the Comelec, the PCA believes that it is also a social responsibility of any organization in the country."

"For example, we realize people don't understand what a party list really is. We have to tell them," he says.

Bullish

In spite of the skepticism in the coming elections, PhilConstruct 2004 is all systems go because Filipino contractors believe the construction industry is the one sector with the highest multiplier effect to the economy.

PCA president Emilio J. Tumbocon says the industry still has the full trust and confidence in the country. He also says that with that premise in mind, "we can get our act together and let the construction industry fuel the (country's) growth.

Tumbocon is optimistic that if Philippine politics could get its act together, then there is "a light at the end of the tunnel."

Says Madrasto: "Construction is an investment-driven industry. If nobody is investing in houses and condos because they want to migrate to the United States, then there's no construction. That's not a favorable situation for everybody."

"But go to the banks, the banks are awash with cash. That means people are keeping their money because of the unstable situation. PCA advocates that we should get our acts together because the elements for upswing are in place," he says.

"We feel if we just join in the skepticism, nothing will happen. We are bullish because we believe the situation will swing (the other way). Go to the shopping centers. There's a lot of money waiting to be invested," says Madrasto.

Good 'pulse'

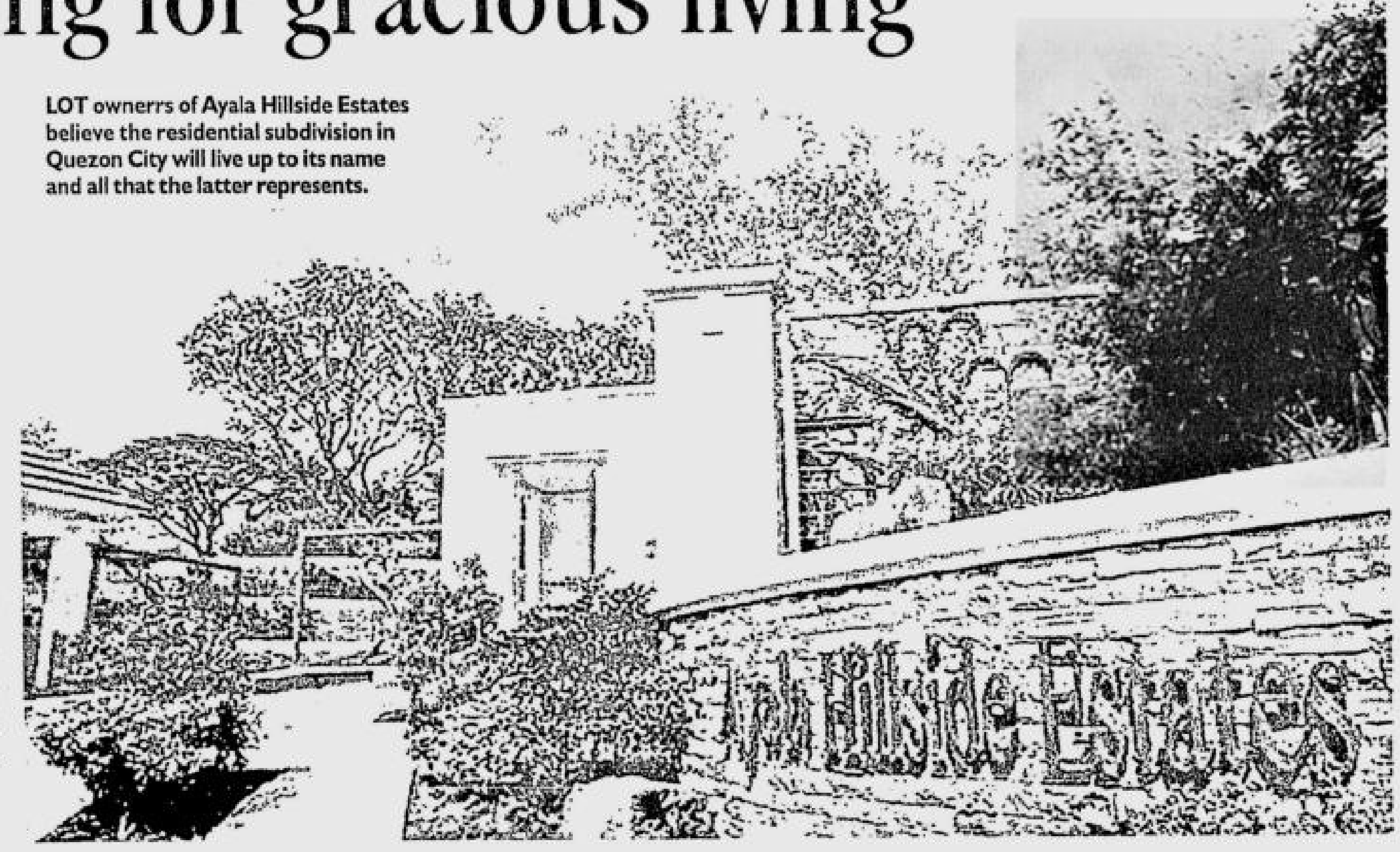
The PhilConstruct 2004 exhibit from Nov. 18 to 21 at the World Trade Center would also be a good "pulse" of where the real estate industry is headed in 2005.

The PCA stresses it is not a political organization. It was established in November 1945 to ensure the construction industry would develop and be attuned with the needs and visions of the country. The PCA is not only made up of contractors, engineers and architects but are also mostly made up of builders-stakeholders of the construction industry, including suppliers of construction materials such as cement, lumber, nail, wood, steel and glass.

There are over 1,500 members, individual and corporate. Some of the regional members are the Cebu Contractors Association and the Davao Contractors Association.

A dramatic setting for gracious living

Demand for this kind of property is bound to remain strong for a long time to come


LOT ownerrs of Ayala Hillside Estates believe the residential subdivision in Quezon City will live up to its name and all that the latter represents.

BEING an avid golfer, Dr. Ed E. Francisco was quite familiar with the original Capitol Hills Golf Course in Quezon City, its views of the rolling greens, the mountains and even glimpses of the Metro Manila citiscape from some high points. Often, the dentist would be struck by "the drama of the terrain" as he made his way through the greens.

Thus, when Ayala Land Inc. transformed a portion of the course into a top-end residential subdivision, he had no hesitation about purchasing a 539-sq-m lot within the project. He will soon begin construction of a five-bedroom home there. Francisco, his wife and two sons anticipate living in Ayala Hillside Estates and taking in the views of the new, updated executive golf course. Golf course and residential area have been designed so both golfers and residents can fully appreciate the scenes offered by this idyllic area.

The affable Francisco looks forward to enjoying the built-in "peace of mind and security" offered by the project to its residents and bolstered by the solid track record of its developer. "You can count on Ayala Land to always deliver on its promises," he says.

AYALA Hillside Estates offers scenic views of the fairways from a number of lots and some vantage points in the subdivision.

Best values

Only 25 years, Ayala Hillside lot owner Michelle Villaruel can likewise visualize raising a family in this scenic community close to top-rated schools and universities. But being single and based in Singapore, the brand manager for Procter and Gamble admits it may take years before she actually lives in the neighborhood.

In addition to Ayala Hillside's unique surroundings, the winsome Villaruel admits that she bought a lot there primarily as an investment. In lieu of savings, she wanted to earmark part of her expat earnings for "something that would accumulate value on its own." She decided on the project only after visiting many other subdivisions and real estate developments in Quezon City. After weighing the pros and cons of each, she figured she would get the best values in the future from Ayala Hillside Estates.

It helped that she also fell in love with the place at first sight. "Each time I'm home, I visit the lot and see how the community is taking shape. I stand there and don't feel at all like I'm in the city. It's much too peaceful," she says with a smile. The corporate achiever hopes to be able to one day live in Ayala Hillside but keeps her options open depending on what the future and her career will bring.

Extra assurance

Lot owner and real estate specialist Jo Gaston affirms that truly there is no other property like Ayala Hillside Estates in Northern Metro Manila. "There are only 240 lots in this neighborhood," says the broker. Demand for this kind of property is bound to remain strong for a long time to come since few other golf courses are likely to turn residential.

The self-assured Gaston intends to build a home in the community and is particularly pleased that utility lines have been buried underground. This means residents can expect few service interruptions due to gusty winds or service wires that have been snapped by tall moving vans. Moreover, views will remain unblocked by unsightly wires.

Gaston considers it an extra assurance to homeowners that the project carries the Ayala name. Villaruel echoes the sentiment and opines that the project is sure to have been designed to live out to its name and all that it represents.

Andersen niche in RP market

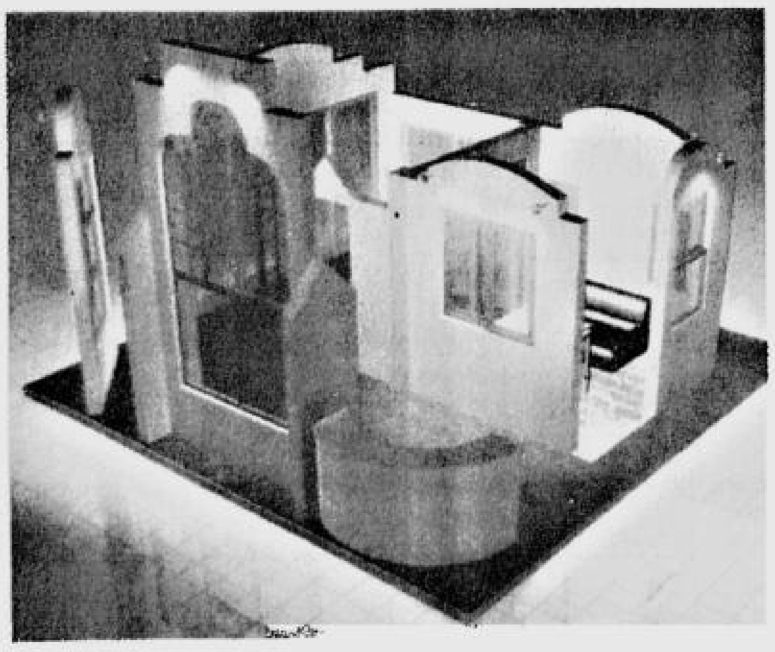
FINE craftsmanship, elegant styling, precise attention to detailing are the hallmarks of the leading brand in the doors and windows industry—Andersen. For almost two decades, Andersen has been helping Philippine families transform their dreams into elegant homes.

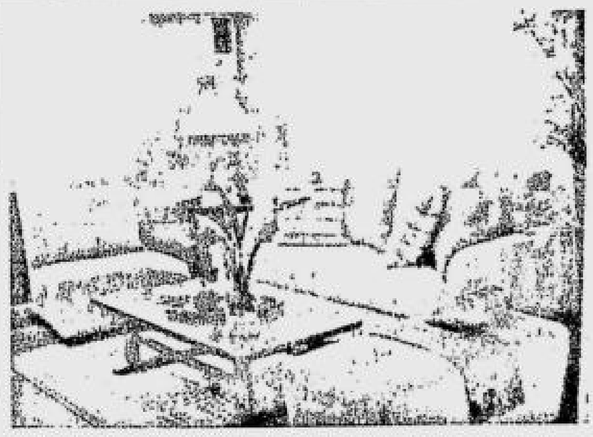
Locally and exclusively distributed by C.A.E. Enterprises, Andersen windows and patio doors glasses with specialized coatings and shapes, patio doors that slide or open with a light touch, and elegantly designed and meticulously crafted frames have been used in many elegant homes from the most exclusive subdivisions to middle-class enclaves in suburban neighborhoods.

Their best selling and most innovative product is the Low-E glass, an insulating glass rated by the US National Fenestration Rating Council as having the lowest solar heat gain coefficient.

A low-coefficient number means the Andersen Low-E glass effectively blocks out heat caused by sunlight so air-conditioners use less electricity which makes for a cost-efficient investment. Low-E glass is actually two glass panes with argon gas and a hermetically sealed space between them. Also, a microscopically metallic coating is added inside, making the glass more effective in keeping out the heat by reflecting UV rays, which are the main cause of heat.

The best Andersen doors and windows were displayed at the 9th World Building and Construction Exposition at the World Trade Center. No less than Andersen Inc., International Division GM Ross Dalin met guests and personally toured them at the Andersen booth. The one-day visit of Dalin marks a significant indication of the company's confidence in the local doors and windows industry as a veritable market in Asia. To find out more on how Andersen can best fit your home needs, particularly doors and windows, call 722 6671 or 722 6644.


A TRIDIMENSIONAL view of the Andersen "home" showcased at Worldbex 2004


WEST PARC MODEL UNIT
Filinvest Alabang Inc. has unveiled the model units for West Parc, a new condominium community soon to rise in the Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang. West Parc offers the comfort of modern living with its highly accessible and convenient location, as well as safe and clean environment. Shown is one of West Parc's two-bedroom units.

Free lecture, review for realty broker's exam

IN CELEBRATION of its 10th anniversary and in its support to professionalize the real estate profession, Urban Institute of Real Estate will conduct a Metro Manila-wide series of lectures and reviews that would extensively prepare participants for the forthcoming licensure examination for real estate brokers.

All lectures and reviews will be free of charge and participants will shoulder only their snacks, handouts and miscellaneous expenses, thereby reducing the overall expenses of an examinee to less than 50 percent of the usual seminar fee.

To completely prepare prospective examinees for the DTI-supervised broker's licensure examination, the Comprehensive Real Estate Seminar (CRES) and review will be the DTI-required 24 hour-course plus a half-day review spread on six weekly sessions from 1:15 to 6:45 p.m. and covers all the mandated subjects and topics covering the examination

Venue is Max's Restaurant at Glorietta 2, Park Square Drive corner Theater Drive, Ayala Center, Makati City, and participants may choose either the Wednesday session, which will be held on March 31, April 14, 21, 28, May 5 and May 19 or the Saturday session, which will be held on April 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29.

Urban is also finalizing venue arrangement for a Friday-Monday evening session in Quezon City-Marikina area.

Experts and authorities in their respective fields headed by Engr. Enrico S. Cruz, a licensed real estate consultant and 1st & 8th placer in the realty appraisers and brokers board exam respectively, Atty. Dennis Tablizo, Atty. Rex Enrico V. Cruz III, Ms. Lena Vergara of HLURB, and others are lined up to lecture on the subjects prescribed by DTI

For more information and schedule of other venues, interested parties may call tel. no. 681 0928 or e-mail [illegible] pacific.net.ph.

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Beauty that's 'skin-deepest'

By Linda B. Bolido

WOMEN may really need to begin from inside themselves if they want to be beautiful outside.

Particularly in terms of holding aging at bay, Dr. Lars Lindmark said much of the prevention, repair and rehabilitation work had to occur internally for significant and visible results to show outside. Lindmark, vice president for scientific affairs of Denmark's Ferrosan A/S, was in Manila recently to tout the merits of the newest in the company's line of skincare products, the Imedeen Time Perfection.

The new advanced formula is designed to care for mature and sun-damaged skin from within. Taking two of the rust-colored triangle-shaped Imedeen Time Perfection tablets every day is expected to promote healthy, supple and radiant skin. It will help reduce the visible signs of aging from within and delay the formation of new ones.

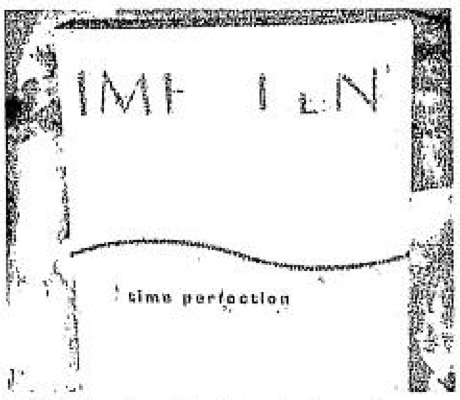
Holding off time

While the new product might not completely rule out facelifts, Botox and other means to hide and repair the ravages of time, it could delay the need for such procedures well enough or reduce the number of times they would be needed.

Lindmark said the Classic, the first in the line of Imedeen skincare supplements that had been in the market for sometime now, was designed to repair skin that was already damaged. Time Perfection, on the other hand, was formulated to offer defense from the elements that hasten aging and prevent them from causing as much damage as they would on unprotected skin.

Unlike other interventions, including surgery, that basically affect only the outer layer of the skin, Imedeen is supposed to work deep down, in the lowest level, preserving and restoring for as long and for as much as possible elasticity to reduce sag and keep the skin firm and supple.

"Other products [and procedures] don't get down to the dermis [the deepest layer of the skin]," Lindmark said. He pointed out that, among women in particular, the skin lost its elasticity almost as quickly as bone mass disappeared starting at the age of 30 when hormonal changes began.



WHILE Imedeen Classic seeks to repair existing damage, the new Time Perfection defends the skin from harmful elements.

As early as possible

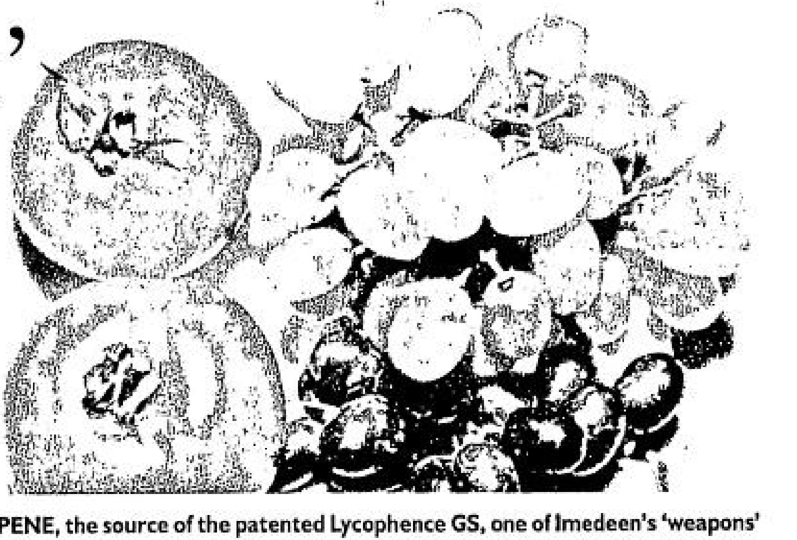
In view of this, he would suggest starting the Imedeen Time Perfection preventive care as early as possible.

Time Perfection uses two of the latest wonder discoveries against all sorts of ills—the Bio Marine Complex and Lycophence GS.

The exclusive Bio Marine Complex which, as the name suggests, draws its components

BEAUTY/ D3

Studies prove you really have to be beautiful inside to look good outside



LYCOPENE, the source of the patented Lycophence GS, one of Imedeen's 'weapons' against aging, gives tomatoes, grapes, melon and other fruits their color.

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Meet your MEDICard Team

Philippine Pediatric Society Fellow, **Dr. Realiza Guanlao-Henson** has been in the practice of her profession for over 14 years now. She joined MEDICard in 2002 and now renders care at Capitol Medical Center (CMC) in Quezon City. She is a Medicine graduate of the University of Santo Tomas and specializes in the field of Pediatrics. She finished her residency for the latter at CMC. She is also affiliated as Lifetime Member to both the Philippine Medical Association and the Quezon City Medical Society. For your consultation needs, visit Doktora Henson's clinic at Room 210, from Mondays to Saturdays, 9 AM to 12 noon.

Contract Signing

MICROSOFT PHILIPPINES, INC., the wholly owned subsidiary of world's leading software provider, US-based Microsoft Corporation, recently renewed its healthcare contract with MEDICard. (Seated L-R) MEDICard's Luis Montoya (EVP & GM), Dr. Nicanor Montoya (Pres.), with Microsoft's Antonio Javier, Jr. (Managing Director), Pam Galvez (Outgoing HR Director), & Magtanggol Bawal (Finance Director). Standing are (L-R) MEDICard's Voltaire Victoria (Mktg & Sales Mngr), Junn Miergas (Corp. Accounts Mngr.) & Miriam Villafuerte (Mktg Services Mngr) with Loida Sagaran (Incoming Microsoft HR Director). Microsoft is a valued MEDICard client since 2000

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

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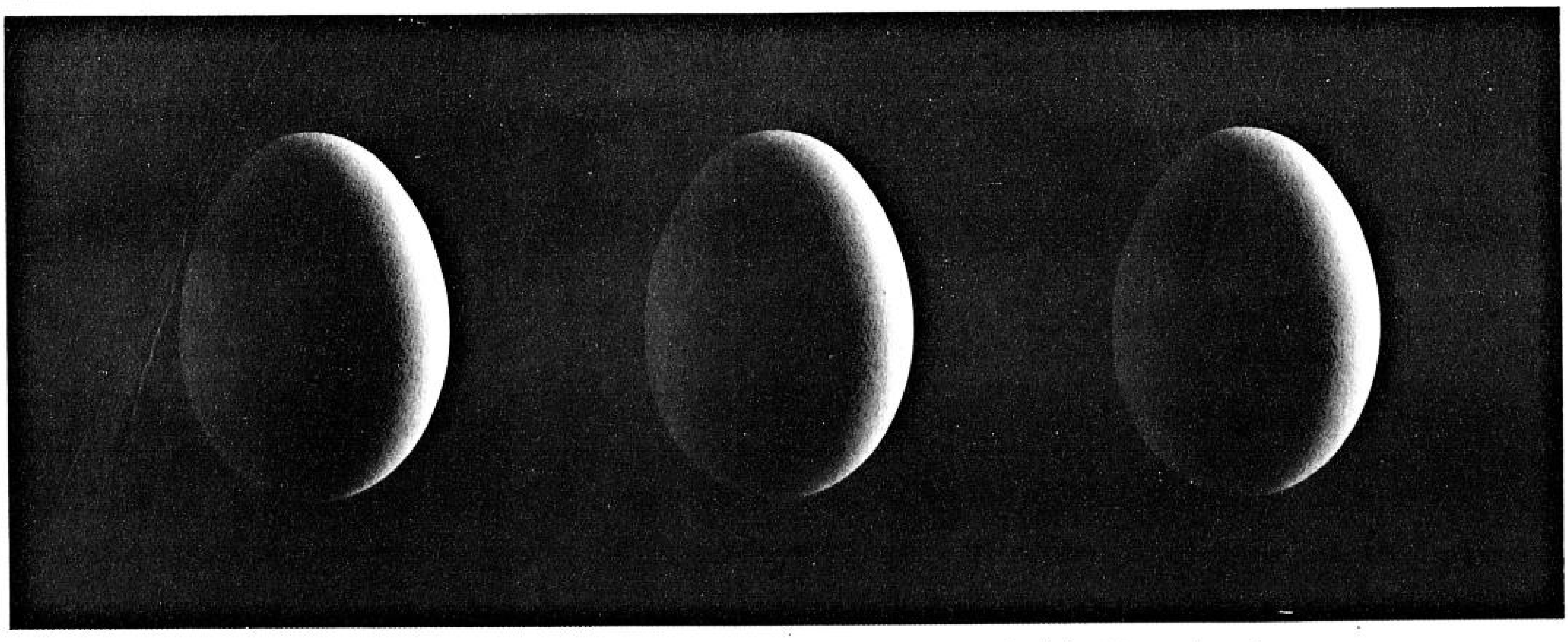


Enjoy three nights for the price of two this Easter. Spend a relaxing Easter at Edsa Shangri-La. Book two nights in a Deluxe Room for only Php 9,300++ or a Superior Room for only Php 9,000++ and enjoy the third night FREE. Dine at any of our restaurants and enjoy a 10% discount from April 4 -10. Plus, get 15% discount on our Easter Sunday Fair tickets. Now, you won't have to hunt for the perfect Easter treat. For reservations and inquiries, call 636-9082 to 87 or e-mail rsvn_esl@shangri-la.com

Room package is valid from April 1 - 30, 2004 only. Complimentary buffet breakfast for two is for the first two days only. Other room rates and packages are also available. Subject to availability, prior reservations required. Open to local residents and expatriates only, proof of identification may be required. Rates are subject to VAT, service charge and government tax.

Edsa Shangri-La
MANILA

GLOBE Platinum's gorgeous Bubbles Barretto and Dish's EJ Litton

EYE-CATCHING stars. Amy Perez and Bing Loyzaga

HEADTURNERS. Hot babes Katya Santos and Maui Taylor

BEAUTIFUL LOVERS. Enjoying the sounds at Dish are Juan Elizalde and Bianca Araneta.

BIG FISH'S big man Domini Primero with wife, pretty Joanne Quintas

DISH'S Philip Cu-Unjieng and Eventscape's Stephen Ku

Off-the-ramp fashion parade

KEI Laurel, *moi*, Ricky Ilacad, Jason Mraz and Cheska Laurel

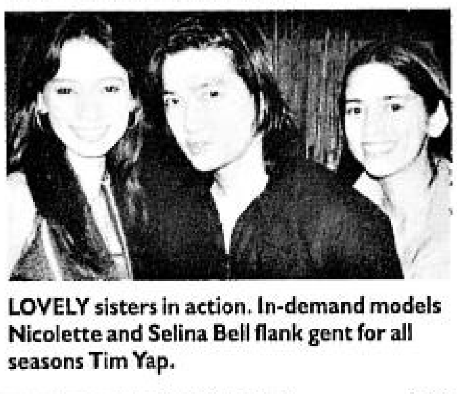
JOSEPHINE Knox, Dhory Alvendia and Nympha Yatco

SPIRIT of '67 crooner Johnny Velasquez

IAN and Adam, members of Jason Mraz's band, with Gel Litton

BIRTHDAY celebrator Raya Mananquil

ALL in the famille. Twins Robby Mananquil and Rissa Mananquil-Samson


LOVELY sisters in action. In-demand models Nicolette and Selina Bell flank gent for all seasons Tim Yap.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** on **Kodak Max**

WHEN supermodel **Raya Mananquil** celebrated her birthday recently at the *tres* fashionable and "in" restaurant Kai in Greenbelt 2, Cosmo Manille's most gorgeous mannequins and hottest hunks were there in full force, *palanggas*.

"Wow, I can't believe all these gorgeous sexy babes all in one place. Heck, I can't even decide who to look at first," a handsome bachelor said.

I won't say who this handsome bachelor was looking at all night, *palanggas*.

Raya became one of Manille's favorite übermodels soon after finishing her AB Interdisciplinary Studies at the Ateneo de Manila University where she was a Dean's Lister. She was a fab hit when she represented the Philippines in Singapore in the Elite Model Look International.

Kai's to-die-for buffet was so yummy, I "attacked" my super fave—the lamb shanks, which melt in your mouth. Ahh!

The hip invitees loved the Alize, a wicked blend of tequila rose and amarula sent by **Chiqui Torres Tan** and **Fran Ribano** of Premiere Wines and Spirits, through super PR gal, **Annie Ringor**, natch!

Raya's colleagues in the Professional Models Association of the Philippines (PMAP) sashayed to Kai, headed by mega fashion director **Jackie Aquino** and its president, eye-catcher **Rissa Mananquil Samson**. The 12 supermodels were led by stunning head-turner **Phoemela Baranda**. The pack of top male models was led by **Robby Mananquil**, natch.

I swear, *palanggas*, we could have had our own "Thunder from Down Under" with all the hunks around.

Also among the well-wishers were our very own, INQUIRER's adorable fun couple, my buddy **Dennis Valdes** and his gal **Tessa Prieto-Valdes**; eligible **Paolo Prieto**; gent for all seasons **Tim Yap**; Philippine Tatler's **Anton San Diego**; Cosmo's **Myrza Sison**; the Star's **Ipe Cruz**; my favorite night owl **Pepper Teehankee**; and stylish babe **Celine Lopez**, looking absolutely radiant with her new beau, *el guapo y simpatico* **Antonio Ressano Garcia** (but, as of this writing, already Celine's ex, ooops); my favorite gal, Mega's **Liza Ilarde**; **Pierre Calasanz**; and **Anne Viazon** of Seventeen and Folded and Hung, of which Raya has been the billboard model for the past two years, *palanggas*.

"All aboard" were Raya's swinging traveling companions in our Star Cruises trips. Leading the group was prince of PRs **Keren Pascual** with sultry beauty **Pops Fernandez**; handsome hunk **Albert Martinez** and his wife, eye-catching **Liezl**; and true gourmets, restaurant entrepreneurs **Rikki Dee** and his stylish, fashionable wife, **Beng. Dolphy** and **Zsa Zsa Padilla** were no-shows, but they sent two giant birthday cakes.

I overheard one of the beauties telling a dude: "Don't you just hate it when people talk behind your back?" He answered, "Yeah, especially if they are sitting behind you in the moviehouse." He's one cool dude, huh!

Raya's close pals, handsome **Marco Lobregat**, **Bea Ledesma**, **Regine King**, **Jonathan Ong**, **Nazri Noor**, **Yvanna Maalat**, **Nicole Warren** and **Koko Nograles** were all there to wish our glam B-day babe a safe and productive trip before she leaves for England for a summer course at the chichi Oxford University, no less.

I first saw Raya during a trip to Italy when she was a Stefanel teen model. She was only 13 then, so tall, slim but definitely promising with that exotic beauty. I knew instantly she'd be a top model someday. The rest is... need I say more?

Alive and kicking

Whoever said Dish was closed? Dish continues to swing. Just the other night, it was packed sardine-style as the hit band Spirit of '67 played without batting an eyelash. Fans and regulars swayed their favorite '60s and '70s sounds. And, oh, how they danced... on the floor, on the stage, and even on table tops! After all, great sounds are hard to resist, *di bala*?

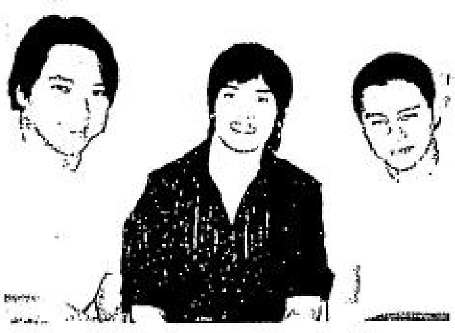
Leaders of the pack that night were birthday gal, fashionable **Beth Romualdez**, with Spirit of '67 die-hard groupies like society gals **Nini Valdes**, **Josephine Knox**, **Cora Relova**, **Inday Arellano** and **Offie Benvides**. You couldn't miss Globe Platinum's stunningly gorgeous babes, **Bubbles Barretto** and her sister, **Apples**, who helped give away souvenir CDs of '60s/'70s hits, plus songs by Spirit of '67, compliments of Globe Platinum, natch!

The weekend was for a genuine contemporary artist, young good-looking **Jason Mraz**, one of today's major singer-songwriters, along with that talented new star in the galaxy, **Ryan Adams**, and **John Mayer**.

Well, thanks to Dish, Eventscape, Asian Events, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, Nescafé and ERG, we had a blast and a chance to get up close to Jason, his music and his humor. Jason took to the stage with only his guitar, his tunes and a razor-sharp wit. And, would you believe, he gave the Pumas he was wearing to a lucky member of the audience?

GROOVING to the sounds of Spirit of '67 at Dish are Diana Cua, Babot Oreta and birthday gal Beth Romualdez.

ICONS ALL. Jesi Mendez, Pinky de Leon and Fanny Serrano


FAMOUS PR man Keren Pascual with top model Luke Jickain and boyishly handsome Miguel Romualdez

MY favorite pepperoni, Pepper Teehankee, with sultry concert queen Pops Fernandez and her close pal, Tatler's Anton San Diego

RAYA'S Poveda and Ateneo gang. Charles Ang, Sarah Sison, Bea Villamor and Monica Alcid

MODEL of the hour Brent Javier

ATENEANS, FIGHT! Kathleen King, Martina Gomez, Raya, Ferdinand Aguila, Popop Arriola, Marcy Marcelo and Gia Pastorfide

BEAUTIES in a row. Liezl Martinez, Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Beng Dee

CRUISE PALS. Young businessman Dennis Valdes and award-winning actor Albert Martinez

EAZEL Don with her man, Jesper Frantzich

Just say 'No'

"The only joy in the world is to begin."—Cesare Pavese

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

"NO" is a spare and simple word that bears a powerful appeal simply because it so basic, so much used in our everyday language that we might have taken it for granted.

Here is a word that celebrates finality, an end to something that most certainly leads to another thing.

Over-committed

We live in an over-committed world filled with deadlines, quotas, goals, mission statements and self-fulfillment/gratification. Everyone has the "I must do/be/have" syndrome. And whether we are conscious or not, we are driven, compromised and committed. There is no breathing space for the sane and the tranquil.

But there's hope. If we all learned to say no, then maybe life can be a little easier, our health a little stronger, our outlook a little perkier.

Say no, when . . .

- The scale shows you are 10 pounds beyond your ideal weight (i.e., if your usual 130 pounds is now 140 pounds, say no. Losing 10 pounds to get back on track is easier than shedding 30 pounds.)
- Your fridge is filled with sweets and desserts of varied flavors, shapes and sizes. Sugar not only contributes to weight problems but makes you vulnerable to illness.
- Your home, car, office and attaché case have a handy bottle of your favorite alcoholic/soda drink. The best way to avoid temptation is to stay away from it. Moderation is the key to ensuring your pleasures do not become addictions.
- The people around you (family, friends, officemates) bombard you with negative energy all day/night. A way to find out is to check if you are mentally/emotionally exhausted when in the presence of someone. People with nothing nice to say about anything or anybody cannot contribute to your well-being; rather, they can cause ill-health.
- You have been hot-tempered more than usual. Check yourself and do some serious soul searching why you are constantly angry. Remember, emotions have a biochemical effect on the body. Angry persons normally are prone to ulcers and heart disease/hypertension (high blood pressure).
- You have been out every night of the week and thoroughly in need of rest. Cut back on the late nights and take it easy.
- You have been sleepless or an insomniac for sometime now and don't know its cause. A deep-seated reason for your insomnia is locked away in your subconscious (unless you have a physical condition requiring medication whose side effect is restlessness).
- You depend on tranquilizers to be able to sleep. No matter how you look at it you have a drug dependency problem. Time to address your life issues.
- You look into the mirror and see an unhappy face staring back at you. Don't you think it's worth the time and effort to investigate the whys of your condition then do something about it? Didn't you know you have the right to be happy? It's your divine birthright.
- Your body aches and pains have been nagging you to go see a doctor. Stop procrastinating and make that important visit to your physician.
- Your food choices are sweet, salty, fatty/oily and plenty. When your food cravings are not healthy, it's time to say no and embrace a new lifestyle.
- Your plate is overloaded with food and you're only half-way through the "eat-all-you-can" buffet. A plateful of food is more than enough. No reason to grab another plate because you want your money's worth.
- You burped once and you're too stubborn to stop munching. Your stomach has a limit and your burp is the signal that there is no more space.
- You've been crying for the past four days over someone or something. Psychologists allow you to wallow in misery and self-pity for only 48 hours. After that, you have to snap out of it. Don't be the architect of your own misery. Life is much too precious to flood in tears.
- You find yourself neglected, exhausted and burnt-out. Start pampering yourself now. Time for yourself is precious.

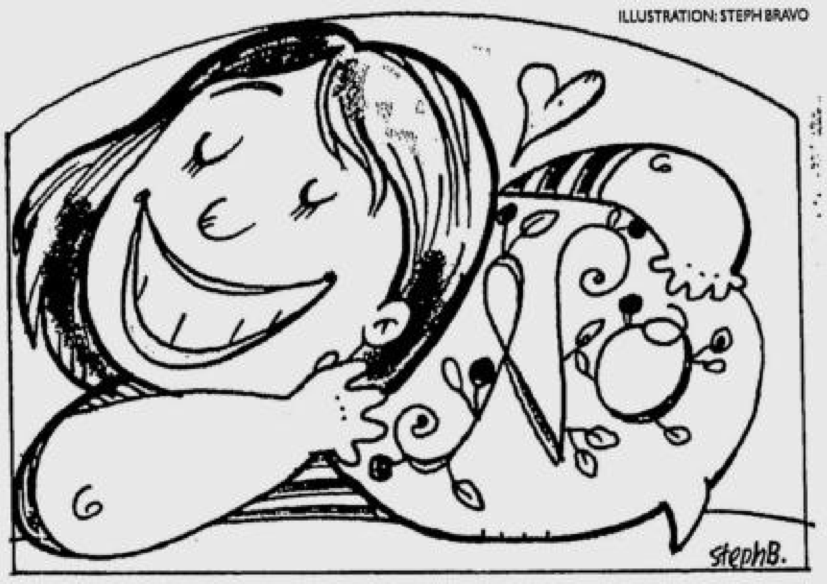


ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

'Yes' to yourself

Sit quietly in a corner and get a piece of paper. List down all the things you would like to say no to. Directly opposite list down the things you want to say yes to. Affirm: "I say no to welcome yes in my life. Yes to love, health, wealth and joy. And this is so."

Health tonic

Instead of a sandwich for snacks, have a handful of black grapes and a cup of fennel tea. The combination works as a liver tonic and cleanses you thoroughly. Make it a weekly habit.

Love and light!

Watch the "Cory Quirino Show," Studio 23, 11:30 p.m., Wednesdays. Listen to "Ma Beauty Po Naman," dzMM (630), 6 p.m., Sundays.

Beauty. . .

From page D1

from the seas, is "scientifically proven to nourish the dermis and improve basic structure and texture, as well as the skin's natural ability to retain moisture."

On the other hand, Lycophence GS, which has an American patent, is a highly potent antioxidant complex to help defend the skin against any damage-direct or indirect-from free radicals, thus, slowing down degradation that results in the more obvious and unsightly signs of aging. The complex is derived from lycopene, the substance that gives tomatoes, guava, rosehip, watermelon and pink grapefruit their color. Studies have shown that lycopene, which helps strengthen defense against damage to the body's cells, is deposited in the liver, lungs, prostate gland, colon and skin. Its concentration in body tissues also tends to be higher than other antioxidants, hence, its importance in skincare.

Improvement in 12 weeks

Lindmark said studies in Europe and America had proven the beneficial effects of Imedeen Time Perfection. He said, "Increases in moisturization and dermal density (the thickness of the lowest level of the skin) were recorded within 12 weeks of use."

Although no studies so far had been done among Asians except for a limited one in Japan due to factors like the need for a qualified collaborating institution, cost, etc., Lindmark said Ferrosan had not had a single complaint in all the time Imedeen had been available in the region. He did not think there would be a lot of difference in the effects of the supplement on users on either side of the globe. But he said studies specific to Asians could be done when the market expanded enough to make them viable.

DR. Lars Lindmark of Ferrosan A/S says studies show Imedeen's benefits are visible after just 12 weeks of use.

The Ferrosan executive allayed concerns, since Imedeen was taken internally, that the product would cause adverse reactions especially when combined with other supplements. Lindmark said experience so far showed the product could be combined with just about anything. "We haven't found anything yet that is contraindicated [producing negative effects]," he said.

Still, he would strongly advise people with existing medical conditions to seek the advice of their physicians before starting the Imedeen therapy routine.

More information on Imedeen is available at info@fph.ferrosan.com

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Hair treatment with right pH level

TONY Galvez, one of the country's top hair stylists, said hair needed the right mix of acidity and alkalinity represented by the symbol pH.

Saying the hair should have a pH level of 5.0, he noted Filipinos had dry hair because of the water and because shampoos had higher pH levels.

Products with high pH value could damage the hair and cause split ends, among others. New hair care regimen as well as straightening, rebonding, coloring, permanent waving, bleaching and hair styling aids could also cause damage.

Galvez recommends Infiltrate Treatment pH which, he said, had the right pH level of 5.0. He said the product could help restore and repair broken hair cuticle. It also maintained the natural acidity of the hair while protecting it against chemicals, heat and stress. It prevented and eliminated excessive dryness and stubborn coarseness of the cuticle while enhancing the hair's health and beauty.

Galvez said local shampoo products normally averaged pH 7 to 8, which was too strong for the hair.

He also recommends Infiltrate Shampoo pH 5.0 to make the hair smoother, softer and healthier.

Call Perfect Solution Trading at 9134370/9133953. Visit Tony Galvez Centrum at 124 9th Ave. corner P. Tuazon Boulevard, Araneta Center, Cubao, QC.

Mag offers tips for summer

HEALTHY Options News Digest uncovers "The Truth About Carbs" in its March/April issue. When Atkins came out against bread, potatoes and pasta 30 years ago, nutritionists dismissed him as a crank. But many experts now believe that Atkins was at least half right in condemning carbohydrates. Healthy Options provides readers with excerpts from Dr. Atkins New Diet Revolution with revised and updated edition.

Healthy Options
ARROHYD

Still on diet programs for weight loss, check out the health news on "Grapefruit-weight loss remedy."

As for looking well this summer, "Vital Finds" touches on sleeping well and living longer. Read also about the herbs for insomnia and tips for insomniacs and many more interesting updates. Healthy Options is located at 1/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City; Rustan's Supermarket, Makati City; 2/L Festival Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang; G/L Ayala Center, Cebu City; LG/F SM City, North Edsa; 2/L SM City Manila; Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati City; 2/L SM Megamall B, Edsa, Mandaluyong City; SM Pampanga and SM Bicutan.

Holy Week camp for whole family

THE FARM at San Benito, Lipa, Batangas is holding a family health camp for Holy Week, April 5-11, that combines health, recreation and togetherness.

Parents participate in an optimum wellness program covering natural treatments integrating living food nutrition, detoxification, exercise and spiritual development programs, and spa treatments.

Kids will have yoga, art and handicrafts classes, swimming, kite-flying, traditional Filipino games, horseback riding, nature trail walks, story-telling and pajama party, among others. An egg hunt is scheduled on Easter Sunday.

A special family package includes free accommodation for two children 12 years and below, 50 percent discount on meals, minimum fees for activity materials and economy rates for *yayas*.

Call Lipa direct 6963175 and 6963795 or the Mandarin Oriental Hotel booking office, 7513498 amd 7513497. Log on to www.thefarm.com.ph.

Help Your Baby Fight the Good Fight

Newborn.

The word conjures up images of sweet, helpless infants toothlessly smiling at their moms in typical camera commercials. But it also brings to mind fragile creatures that have a knack for catching something bound to make mommy miserable. Bring a baby to a mall and nine times out of ten he'll come home with a fever guaranteed to keep you up all night. With all their vulnerability, it's only logical that Filipinos have thought of many ways to protect their precious bundles: *stampitas*, jade bracelets, charms, even the saliva of a potential *usogero*. No one wants to see a sick kid. But instead of resorting to your *arbularyo's* recommended *anting-antings*, it's better to understand your baby's body so that you can defend him better.

First things first: why do babies get sick so easily?

Blame it on an immature immune system. A baby is born with only basic defenses, such as antibodies from the mother and from her breastmilk. Other than that, the immune system has to learn to fight bacteria and viruses, just as your baby learns to talk. "Think of the immune system like the brain," notes Andy Liu, MD, a pediatric allergy and immunology specialist at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Denver.

According to the Myles Textbook for Midwives, when a baby is still in his mother's womb, the closed environment prevents him from receiving immunoglobulins, infection-fighting toughies present in our blood. Of the four variants of immunoglobulin, only one, IgG, is small enough to pass through the placenta. The other immunoglobulins help protect the digestive system but are only developed when the child is around two years old.

Natural barriers like stomach acidity and the production of enzymes pepsin and trypsin, which keep the small intestine sterile, are not developed until a child is 3 or 4 weeks old. This makes him sensitive to bacteria present in his food and water.

Up to six months, babies' neutrophils - a type of white blood cell that contains infections before antibodies come to fight - aren't fully functional. If a baby gets a throat infection, it will go through his whole system rather than stay in one area. "Babies can get very sick very fast," adds Dr. Liu. Fevers are signs that baby's body is fighting an infection, so they should always be taken seriously.

If you want to help your baby, keep these things in mind:

1. Use sterilized water for your baby's formula and meals. Tap water may contain bacteria, viruses, and parasites that cause cholera, hepatitis A, and diarrhea. Bottled water is also insufficient for babies' safety needs. Although distilled water is pure, its containers are not sterilized before filling, or sealed airtight and sterilized after filling, which leaves it open to contamination during the manufacturing process as well as during storage and handling. Mineral, spring, or filtered water undergo minimal disinfection, which leaves babies susceptible to bacteria. These water variants also have a high level of minerals, which can overwork baby's undeveloped kidneys.
2. Make sure everything that goes in his mouth is clean. This goes for his toys, bottles, and pacifiers, too.
3. Tell everybody to wash their hands before touching Junior.
4. Lay off the anti-*usog* saliva wiping. The last thing you want is someone else's germ-filled spit on your darling's belly.

Why elementals are different from humans

Part I

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licau

THE FIRST Western scientist to classify the different elementals or nature spirits and describe their characteristics was Paracelsus, a 16th-century Swiss physician, alchemist, mystic and medical critic.

Paracelsus is considered the most original medical thinker of the 16th century, far ahead of other medical scientists of his time. As a medical reformer he criticized the medical practices of his contemporary doctors, earning him their ire. He pioneered in chemical pharmacology and therapeutics, and was the first to expose the errors of Galen.

But Paracelsus, despite his outstanding contributions to medical science, also believed in supernatural things, intuition and the invisible causes of illness. According to a pamphlet written by Manly Palmer Hall, Paracelsus "warned his contemporaries that to divide therapy from religion was a grave error in judgment. To him, the advancement of practical therapy depended upon a continuous exploration of the invisible side of nature, a search for causes and the realization that man was not simply a physical creature, but a living soul whose internal attitudes could profoundly affect his health."

Some of Paracelsus' solid and outstanding contributions to science are: He discovered hydrogen and nitrogen. He developed methods for the use of mercury to treat certain diseases. He established a correlation between cretinism and endemic goiter and introduced the use of mineral baths or spas. He was the first to observe geographic differences of diseases and "was almost the only asepsist between Mandevil and Lister."

The German philosopher Lessing said of the Swiss: "Those who imagine that the medicine of Paracelsus is a system of superstitions which we have fortunately outgrown will, if they once learn to know its principles, be surprised to find that it is based on a superior kind of knowledge which we have not yet attained but into which we may hope to grow."

Nature spirits

Belief in the existence of elementals or nature spirits is of ancient origin and universal. People in all corners of the globe have names or words to describe them.

One of the most original contributions of Paracelsus to human knowledge is his classification of the different types of elementals, which people are still using until now, adopting his descriptions of them.

It is not certain where Paracelsus obtained his knowledge of elementals or nature spirits. According to Hall, "He may have gained his information from the Arabs who had elaborate teachings about these invisible people. He may have gained it from the witches and gypsies whom he knew."

What is certain is that Paracelsus was the first western scientist to write a complete or comprehensive treatise on the subject. His descriptions of these creatures were, for a long time, the only source of information about them. Later writers and researchers merely elaborated on them.

The doctrine of elementals from the point of view of Paracelsus begins with the following premise: "There are two kinds of flesh, the flesh derived from Adam and the flesh that is not from Adam. The flesh from Adam is coarse, earthly flesh that is tangible and can be held and tied. The flesh not from Adam is subtle and cannot be bound or held because it is not derived from earth. The flesh from Adam cannot pass through solids. The flesh not from Adam passes through solid substances and needs no door."

The elementals or nature spirits are what Paracelsus refers to as "flesh not from Adam." They differ from humans in two respects: "First, they have a body composed of only one element, and they do not have a soul. They have flesh, blood and bone. They speak and eat and drink; wander about and bear children. Yet they are not human, nor are they truly spirit. They are swift like spirits yet in many ways they resemble man. They partake of both spirit and matter, yet they are apart from both, being more like a conjunction of them, like a mixture of sour and sweet, or colors blended."

This explains why elementals can get hurt and why they also grow old and die, despite the fact that they are spirits and cannot normally be seen by humans.

According to Paracelsus, "Elementals are unlike pure spirits for they are mortal, but they are not like man for they have no soul. They are higher than human beings in some respects because they resemble spirits, but are without moral nature because they have no soul. Christ died for man to save his soul. He did not die for the elementals because these creatures did not come from Adam. As man is made in the image of God, the elementals are made in the image of man."

Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 7-8:30 p.m.

To be continued

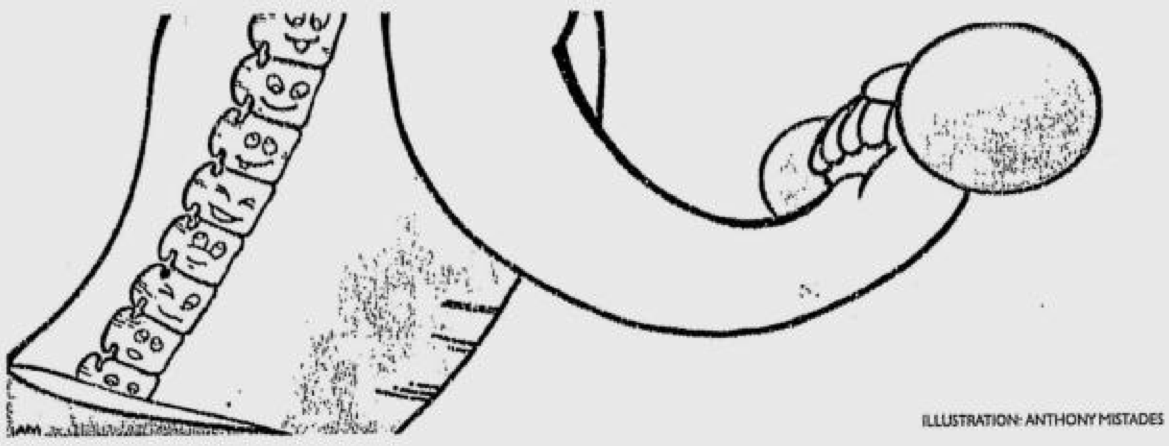


ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Different names, same goal

Part II

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

BOTH yoga and Pilates pay special attention to the proper alignment of the spine when doing exercises. To stabilize the spine, both disciplines use special techniques, which are very similar but have different names.

Basically, you use muscular contraction to keep the pelvis, lower back, or ribcage stabilized so you can safely and effectively move the limbs. In yoga, it is called the system of *bandhas* or locks. In Pilates, it is called placements as in pelvic placement.

Proper spinal alignment is vital to protect the spine. Techniques can and should be used not just in yoga and Pilates but also when lifting weights and doing other forms of athletic exercises.

Celebration of the spine

Good friend and fitness colleague Lawrence Biscontini likes to say that yoga and Pilates are a celebration of the spine. Joseph Pilates said you were only as healthy as your spine. Yoga believes your spine houses energy centers or *chakras* which, if blocked, lead to poor health.

Yoga and Pilates will both develop a strong and flexible spine. Well-designed classes have exercises where the spine is taken forward, backward, sideways and rotated.

Flexible strength

A common misconception that people have about yoga and Pilates is that they are all about stretching. Perhaps this is because one of the benefits you get from both is improved flexibility. The truth is yoga and Pilates develop what is called "flexible strength"—muscles that are strong enough to lift, stabilize and move the body through a full range of motion.

Joseph Pilates liked to use the image of a cat to describe the lean musculature and ease of movement achieved by his exercises. Yoga will do the same.

Yoga and Pilates use the weight of the body as resistance to challenge the muscles to become stronger. Yoga has more standing exercises that develop leg strength as well as balance. Pilates is mostly done lying on your back, on your stomach, on your side and sitting down. That's why I like to do both forms of exercise to have a good blend of standing and mat exercises.

Yoga also tends to have more exercises that challenge the upper body (chest, upper back, arms) than Pilates unless you are doing machine-based Pilates, in which case, the springs attached to the machines deliver sufficient resistance to strengthen the upper body muscles.

Aerobics

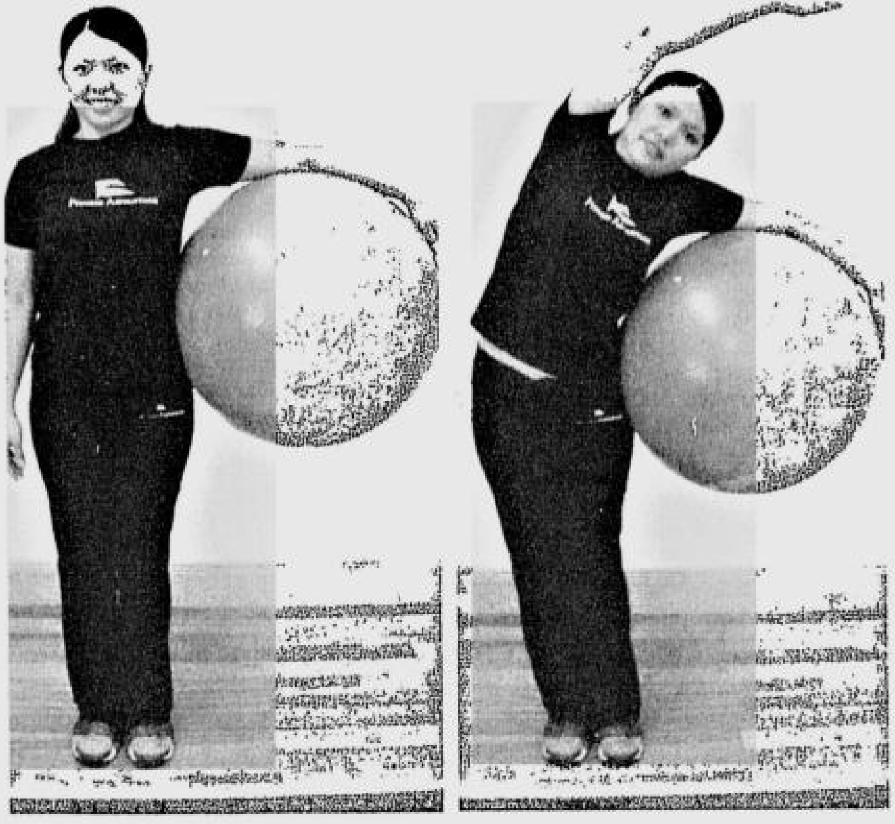
Aerobic or cardiovascular exercise is any exercise done continuously for 15-60 minutes or more while using the arms and legs in a rhythmic fashion. The goal of aerobic exercise is to increase the amount of blood pumped per beat to improve the efficiency and stamina of the heart, lungs and blood vessels. Examples are walking, running, swimming, dancing, etc.

Unless you are doing Ashtanga yoga, which moves rapidly from one position to another, yoga and Pilates do not qualify as cardiovascular or aerobic exercise. Thus, if you want a complete exercise program, you have to supplement your yoga and/or Pilates classes with some form of aerobic exercise.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Standing lateral stretch with stability ball



THIS exercise stretches the sides of the torso.

Equipment:

Stability ball. If you don't have a ball, do the exercise against the wall.

Exercise technique:

1. Stand with the ball against your hip with your right arm over it. If you are doing it against the wall, stand one arm's length away with your right hand on the wall.

2. Lean sideways and take your left arm over your head.

3. Hold the stretch for the desired length of time. Repeat on the other side.

Performance tips:

1. Press your hips to the left as you take your left arm over your head.

2. Focus on elongating sideways over the ball rather than just leaning into it.

Repetitions:

Hold the stretch for 10-20 seconds. Do one or two sets.

HUMAN Nourishing Body Moisturizer. Available in Honey Milk, Rice Milk and Milk at P75 per 230-g bottle

Yes, milk does your body good

HUMAN gentle grains, body soaps (oat milk, papaya, honey and rice), nourishing body moisturizer (honey, rice and milk) and body wash (honey and milk)

HUMAN Rice Milk Gentle Rice Grains Scrub. Gentle grain rice scrub exfoliates tired skin cells from your body. Available at P129 per 250-ml bottle

MAKE your bath more than just a cleansing experience but a relaxing one as well with the new Milk Body Care line from Human.

In keeping with the Fresh Products line, the formula has been reworked for a much higher level of satisfaction.

Aside from milk soaps and lotion, the new line has more products to offer including moisturizers, body wash and body scrubs.

Essential ingredients are all naturally farm produced, such as milk, honey milk and rice milk. These are combined with vitamins to revitalize and soften the skin and provide greater protection.

Human has come up with three new variants of its nourishing body moisturizer line—milk, honey milk and rice milk.

Milk Nourishing Body Moisturizer and Milk Delectably Creamy Body Wash. A nutritiously rich and creamy bathing milk brimming with moisturizing milk protein to leave the skin feeling smooth. The milk-flavored body wash has a calming milky scent for a lush sensation that awakens and stirs the senses.

Both are enriched with Vitamins A, D and E.

Honey Milk Nourishing Body Moisturizer and Honey Milk Delectably Creamy Body Wash. The body moisturizer soothes delicate and sensitive skin and leaves it with the pleasant scent of warm honey. The body wash gives the skin a squeaky clean feeling.

Rice Milk Nourishing Body Moisturizer and Gentle Grain Rice Scrub. Both products carry the natural beauty and health benefits of rice milk. The body moisturizer gives skin a much-needed boost and carries a light scent that is comforting.

The scrub has apricot seeds to gently exfoliate tired skin cells.

The moisturizers all have a light, non-greasy formula, absorbs quickly and removes accumulated residues and skin impurities.

The Milk Body Care Line is available at all Human stores nationwide.

Best retailers awarded

CAMILO Bitong (second from right) of Bayo, Store of the Year-Alabang Town Center, with (from left) Fernando Zobel de Ayala; Miriam Katigbak, senior VP and group head of Commercial Centers Group, Ayala Land Inc.; and Francisco Licuanan III, Ayala Land president

BAYO, Carbon and Levi's received Store of the Year awards at the 6th Annual Ayala Merchant Rewards at the Greenbelt 3 Park.

Bayo won Store of the Year for Alabang Town Center, Carbon for its store in Greenbelt 3 and Levi's for it's Ayala Center Cebu boutique.

The award is given to establishments that demonstrate product innovation and loyalty by bringing their businesses to the Ayala malls.

In a program hosted by television personality Christine Bersola, the award was presented by Fernando Zobel de Ayala; Francisco H. Licuanan III, Ayala Land Inc. president; Miriam O. Katigbak, senior vice president and group head of Ayala Land Commercial Centers Group; and Jose Rene Almendras, president, Cebu Holdings Inc.

Awards were also given for Visual Merchandising Excellence, Marketing Excellence and Store Operations Excellence. More than 120 awards were handed out.

Judges in the Visual Merchandising Excellence were interior designer Catherine Zobel, fashion show director Ariel Lozada, stylist Michael Salientes, lifestyle columnist Mons Romulo-Tantoco. Winners were Top Shop (Alabang), Paul Smith (Makati) and Giordano (Cebu) for foreign apparel and Orange Juice (Alabang), Folded and Hung (Makati) and Loalde (Cebu) for local apparel.

Visual Merchandising awards were also given to select shoes and leathergoods stores, specialty, service and department stores, won by Marks & Spencer (Alabang) and Rustan's (Makati).

Overall winner was leathergoods store Fino of Alabang Town Center, the new Louis Vuitton in Greenbelt 4 and Loalde in Ayala Center Cebu.

CARBON'S Joanna Preysler and Raul Francisco

In the Marketing Excellence category, winners included Toby's Sports for Alabang Town Center, furniture and accessories stores Kish and Firma for Ayala Center Makati, and Sari-Sari store for Ayala Center Cebu. The overall winner was Bench. Runners-up were Bayo and Levi's.

Judges included Pana/PLDT's Raul Alvarez, McCann Erickson's Micky Domingo, BPI's Ginbee Go, Philippine Star's Millet Mananquil and TBWA/Santiago Mangada Puno's Jimmy Santiago.

Best in Values Marketing winners were Kameraworld, Alabang Town Center; Gift Gate, Ayala Center Makati; and True Value Homecenter, Ayala Center Cebu.

For Store Operations Excellence, winners in Alabang Town Center were Picture City, Bayo, Orange Juice, Fino and Baby Guess; in Ayala Center Makati Her Bench, Yellow Cab Pizza, Toby's Sports, Fino, Lacoste Shoes, The Body Shop, Café Havana, Sentro 1771, Carbon and Firma; and in Ayala Center Cebu Artwork, Lacoste, Oro China, Levis and Marks & Spencer.

The Most Promising Retailers award went to Hobbes (Alabang Town Center); Red Box, chocolate café Max Brenner, Montage and accessories store Lily (Ayala Center Makati); Isis and Flame It (Ayala Center Cebu).

The Ayala Malls Merchant Rewards is given annually by Ayala Land Inc. for innovation, creativity, vision and marketing savvy.

TESS Albulario of Levi's (center), Store of the Year-Ayala Center Cebu, with Rene Almendras of Cebu Holdings and Ayala Land's Miriam Katigbak

MARICRIS Bernardo of Alabang Town Center with Bryan Lim of Bench, Discount Plus Card Partner (Hall of Fame)